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OF LITERATURE

Poetry Number

Edited by

William Rose Benét

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The Saturday Review of Literature

Citadel:

Poetry in the National Library

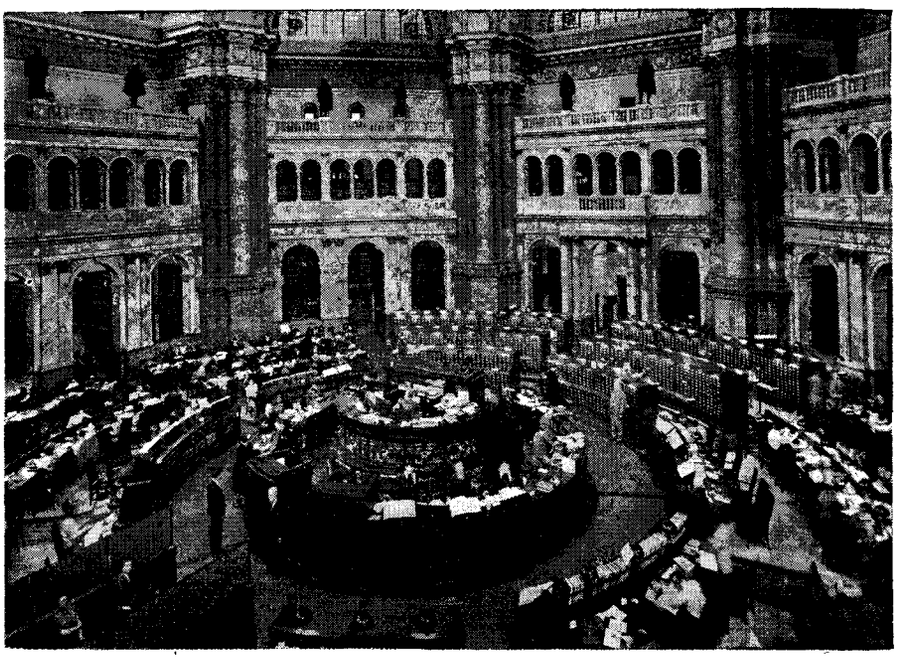
JOSEPH AUSLANDER AND KENTON KILMER

IS the Ivory Tower out of the world, after all? Thinking often of that fabulous edifice, over the past few years, I have come to think of it rather as at the center of our world: the world of the United Nations, the world of the embattled human spirit. There is a stillness at the center of whirlpool or whirlwind, and the hub of a swiftly turning wheel gives an illusory impression of quiet. Similarly the poet's quiet tower, with its glass floor over the caverns of Hell, its skylight turned toward Heaven, and its doors and windows toward the four corners of the earth, is not the cloister of a withdrawn and impartial observer, but the core of the tumult. Here is the very symbol of civilization, the focal point of enemy attack, for the inspired paper-hanger and the divine manufacturer of cheap imitations of cheap gadgets are directing their wrath against the human free-will that finds its culmination in artistic originality. Poetry, with the sister arts, marks civilization from savagery, as the ability to think and to express thought marks man from beast.

Poetry is the symbol and the essence of the way of life that we are defending—affirmation opposed to negation, truth to lie, individualism and brotherhood to regimentation and cruelty, life to death. It is our citadel, and, like the citadels of old, holds, enshrined in beauty, the tokens of our highest faith. But a citadel is not merely something to be attacked and defended, before which we may pour out our lives gladly and gloriously—it is our strong fortress, the center of resistance, into which we may retreat for a time, to issue forth blazing with new ardor for the battle, refreshed and strengthened. In tangible evidence of this faith we wish to build, in the National Library in Washington a visible Citadel, an Ivory Tower of poetry, clamorous with the songs of the great poets, and now and again hushed that the clear fluting of a lesser poet may ring out against a mellow calm. Here, in the center of the councils of the United Nations, in the heart of the war effort, is the place. Now, in turmoil and disaster and heroic resolution, is the time.

With no such visible Citadel, and with, instead of the Ivory Tower, the cluttered garret that has so often been the poet's physical dwelling-place, we have been enabled to make a noble beginning. Our leaden coffer holds treasures whose price is beyond rubies. Shelley's eloquent protest against injustice, "The Mask of Anarchy," is here, written down by Mary Shelley either from her husband's rough draft or, more probably, dictated to her by the poet as he composed it, and then copiously corrected in Shelley's own hand. Here is Rossetti's correspondence with his friend and literary associate, Watts-Dunton, including sonnets sent for his friend's criticism. Here is a signed holograph copy of Siegfried Sassoon's "Everyone Sang," the joyous celebration of what we all thought was the end of the World War, in 1918. We have been made the proud custodians of the entire body of A. E. Housman's poetry in manuscript—all the notebooks with their "working copies," rough drafts, discarded and alternative reading that are known to be extant.

But how can one list one shining jewel and leave twenty, as lustrous, unmentioned? Why speak of the manuscript of "The Mask of Anarchy" and not of Mary Shelley's school notebook, in which she recorded her first meeting with the young poet, and in which he and she alike wrote miscellaneous notes after their marriage? Why dwell on the numerous Rossetti letters and poems, forgetting that charming item, a valentine painstakingly written by Swinburne as a young child, with a word cut from the paper to hide an error? The Housman collection is balanced by the collection of Walt Whitman notes, scraps, and rough drafts left to the Library by one of Whitman's three executors, Thomas B. Harned. To this we have been able to add the Whitman collections of the late Dr. Gustave Percival Wiksell and the late Dr. J. William Lloyd, as well as most valuable gifts from Charles N. Elliot and others. The notable Whit-



Library of Congress

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man collection belonging to Mrs. Frank Julian Sprague, of New York, was lent to us for exhibition in the spring of 1939, and is still attracting a phenomenal stream of visitors.

Albert M. Bender, of San Francisco, whose death a year ago is deeply mourned by thousands, gave us what is probably the finest collection of California printing outside of the state of California itself, and, overlapping that collection, a comprehensive collection of California poetry. A major item within the collection of California poetry is the Sterling group, first editions of George Sterling's poetry and plays, including broadsides and pamphlets as well as books, and numerous autograph manuscripts and signed typescripts of his poems. These manuscripts and typescripts have an added interest, in that very many of them have marginal discussions between Sterling and that weirdly magnificent figure, Ambrose Bierce, on the merits of the poems and of phrases and lines within them.

Robinson's "Lancelot" is here in manuscript, and there is an inscribed copy of his first book, "The Torrent and the Night Before." First edition copies of all Elinor Wylie's books are here, and manuscripts and rough drafts of many of her poems, including the magnificent "Hymn to Earth." Maxwell Anderson's brother and publisher, Kenneth Anderson, has presented us with corrected typescripts and proof sheets of "Valley Forge," "Key Largo," and the recent "Candle in the Wind."

Logan Pearsall Smith has enriched our store-house of treasures by gifts of many long and intensely interesting letters to him from Henry James and George Santayana, and, recently, a further group of letters from Virginia Woolf. Also, he has presented to us his own early letters to his family, recounting his adventures as a young literary man in New York and abroad. One of the first of these letters tells of his meeting Walt Whitman. The entire manuscript of his recently published "Milton and His Modern Critics" is another of Logan Pearsall Smith's gifts to his native land.

Edwin Markham and Joaquin Miller are generously represented, by manuscripts and objects of intimate association. The simple poems loved by millions, such as "Paddle Your Own Canoe" and "In the Sweet Bye and Bye," are given their place of honor here, as in the hearts of the people. Robert Cameron Rogers, who is best known for "The Rosary," is represented by manuscript copies of that poem and of several others, as well as by some rare photographs. The widow of the late Judge John Jerome Rooney has given us a comprehensive collection of his verse manuscript, rough drafts as well as fair copies, including the much-loved poem of the Spanish-American War, "The Men Behind the Guns."

From the late Aline Kilmer, widow of Joyce Kilmer, we have received manuscripts of her husband's poetry and prose, and her own, and a large collection of letters to the Kilmers from various literary figures, ranging, alphabetically, from Irving Bacheller and William Rose Benét to Marguerite Wilkinson and Elinor Wylie. These include a great many letters from Ellis Parker Butler, who toured the country lecturing in partnership with Joyce Kilmer, and from Edwin Arlington Robinson and Shaemas O'Sheel.

These and literally hundreds of other gifts, of manuscripts and rare books, have poured in from wealthy collectors and poor authors, from scholars and from those to whom life has allowed no time for more than the bare realization that poetry is one of the finest manifestations of the human spirit.

But the hoarding and display of the wealth of poetry is not the only function of this embryo Poetry Room of the Library of Congress. Poetry does not live on a scrawled or printed page, or behind the glass of an exhibition case. It must ride forth upon the air, in music gentle or clangorous, to strike our ears and awaken our minds. So, in the spring of 1941, we held in the Library, under the sponsorship of the Library itself and of Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Meyer, a series of four poetry readings, under the general title, "The Poet in a Democracy." Robinson Jeffers, the poet of the Stone Tower by the sea, appropriately came forth from his stone tower to speak, and read his poems—the first such public performance he had ever given. He was followed in turn by Robert Frost, Carl Sandburg, and Stephen Vincent Benét. In conducting this enterprise, we received a most pleasant but embarrassing surprise in the demand for seats. The only auditorium available seats about seven hundred, and we found about four times that many persons eager to hear the poets. We found ourselves obliged to request the newspapers not to mention any reading until after it had taken place, so as not to increase a demand which could not possibly be fulfilled.

Concurrently with the poetry readings were exhibitions of the poets' works displayed for two weeks before and for two weeks after their personal appearances.

Within the past few months, impressive evidence has been given that poetry is a power in national morale. The sonnet, "High Flight," by John Gillespie Magee, Jr., young hero author, was printed in a Washington newspaper and immediately seized

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The Poet and His Livelihood

MARY M. COLUM

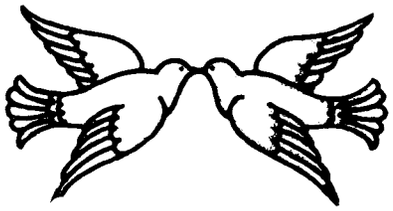
WHEN one speaks of a livelihood through poetry one finds oneself face to face with the old conflict between the goods of culture and the goods of commerce. Let us admit at the outset that they cannot be translated into terms of each other. Still, we have to agree that the man who deals in the goods of culture has to make his living as well as the man who deals in the goods of commerce. And yet, as far as the goods of culture are concerned, unless a man teaches or preaches, his chances of earning a livelihood in the sort of civilization we have is very hazy.

A few years ago a writer in the drama section of the Sunday *Times,* instead of his usual review of a play, wrote an eloquent panegyric of Yeats's poetry, and he wound up his piece by announcing enthusiastically that this beautiful poetry was all free—free as air or water—to those who wanted it. What the critic meant precisely is a matter that the present writer for years has pondered on: Yeats was a great poet, the greatest of our time most critics and readers believe. But his country which provided pensions for every man who shouldered a gun in a revolution or after-revolution, for every civil service clerk, post office official, or village constable, had none for its great poet. Nor did the writer of the panegyric condescend for a moment to consider on what the old poet lived. To repeat, he said that Yeats's poetry was free, in effect that all poetry is free. Fine! But in actual living this means that poetry has come to be regarded as a sort of public philanthropy, like manna or the gentle rain from heaven, and the poet himself a philanthropist who lives on the gentle rain. This now seems to be extended to the idea that great and wealthy organizations like the Radio Corporation of America, wealthy clubs and associations, can expect a poet to appear on their programs gratuitously while the announcer, the electrician, and the cleaning woman are all paid. Often the bamboozled poet himself falls in with this attitude and is not enraged when he is requested by wealthy organizations to give his work and his time for nothing at all.

All this is doubtless part of the widely held belief that any spiritual or intellectual product, any of the goods of culture, has no value that can be assessed in material recompense. This is true. The value of religion and art is always arbitrary. But the churches realized this early and arrangements are made in every country for the support of ministers of religion. The support of art depends on the degree of civilization of a country and its awareness that its civilization is expressed and enhanced by its art.

NOW anybody who looks seriously into the artistic production of this country cannot but come to the conclusion that poetry is the art in which America has expressed itself. From the beginning America's poetry has been outstanding; it is the only one of the new countries of which this can be said. In comparison, the poetry of Canada, South Africa, and Australia is derivative and unimportant. In the last thirty years or so, this country has produced a great proportion of the outstanding poets of the world. But what does it do to insure their livelihood? Unless a poet qualifies as a professor, as a home reliefer, or for a job in one of the alphabetical organizations, nothing. When a poet is young, if he is lucky, he might get a Guggenheim Fellowship which would enable him to live for a year; when he is elderly, if he is lucky, he might get a Pulitzer Prize which would enable him to live for half a year. But our veteran poets are allowed to spend their old age in penury. Occasionally, as in the case of Vachel Lindsay, after a life of hard work and the production of beautiful poetry, the impossibility of earning a livelihood drives them to desperation. We have no Secretary of the Fine Arts in this country; we have nobody to evaluate the services of artists; there are no government pensions for them as there are in small and comparatively poor countries like Norway and Sweden. The arrangement in France was more complex than the giving of state pensions, but at least something could be assured to writers there. In England there is the Civil List which affords, to be sure, a comparatively small amount, something that corresponds to about $750 or $1,000 a year, and there was never enough of these pensions to go around. But at least the outstanding artists did not starve. In this rich country there is no Civil List, no state pensions for artists at all.

We have at present the spectacle of men who have produced work which has rendered them famous and made them part of the history of the country, and yet the country has not thought it worth while to provide their old age with a little security which would also mean dignity for them. One has to say that some of this is the artists' own fault: if they had one per cent of the get-togetherness of manual workers or of the clergy, or of university professors, they, of such importance to civilization, would not find themselves economically so under-privileged or unprivileged. In the world of music a good deal has been done for the musical cultivation of the public. But while there is here a large public interested in poetry as any poetry reviewer is made to realize, there are very few ways by which the poet and his public can be brought in contact. The radio, which has to pay for its music, invariably tries to get its poetry free, and, with some rare exceptions, the bulk of verse coming over the stations is rubbish of a sort that is bound to deaden the taste of the listeners. Obviously there are men among the radio chiefs who understand the food products, who understand news, and who even understand music, but literature with them has been given a back seat or no seat at all.



Then let us take our universities: they have money to endow lectures on poetry; this is to the good in most instances when they have competent lecturers and poets are invited on their programs. The universities also seem to have money to get poetry writing taught, but this is too often done by someone who not only does not know how poetry is written, but who does not know what it is. Then many of the colleges and universities have money to subsidize the publication of books purporting to be either biographical studies of poets, criticism of poetry, or research into poetic production. The funds spent on these works, except in rare cases, are pure waste, because such books, if they are good at all, will find publication through professional publishing houses. There is a Council of Learned Societies, there is the Modern Language Association, there are Carnegie Funds, to back an array of unnecessary works on unnecessary subjects, purportedly relating to culture and mostly written as an aid to academic advancement. Could not the money be used in some way that would really advance culture and aid a poet to his livelihood? The first college president who declares that he will not regard book-writing as an assistance to academic promotion will deserve a statue in several public squares and will save money, print, and paper for some essential cultural achievements.

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Poetry Playwriting

THE DESTROYERS. A Play in Three Acts. By Fleming MacLiesh. Living Drama Series. No. 1. New York: John Day. 1942. 128 *pp.* $2.

Reviewed by SELDEN RODMAN

UNTIL the publication of this play, verse-drama in America had been divided largely between the accomplished playwrights who tried to write plays in verse but were not poets, and the accomplished poets whose feeling for the stage was too remote to permit them to create more than monologues or closet-dramas. The classic restraint and distinguished poetry of Eliot's "Murder in the Cathedral" sufficed to give it an "experimental" success when produced by the Federal Theatre Project several years ago, but it is a poor play. Alfred Kreymborg's verse-fantasies for the stage and radio were courageous pioneering. Archibald MacLeish's brilliant "The Fall of the City" is still the most successful of all verse-dramas intended entirely for the ear. But in "The Destroyers" for the first time the auditory magic of poetry of a high order is combined with an unerring sense of character, plot, and action.

That clean, electric excitement which we experience in the finest work of the Elizabethans, is communicated to the reader in the opening lines:

FIRST SENTRY:
Look there! There, beyond Orion!
SECOND SENTRY:
Yes!
FIRST SENTRY:
It's moving like the outline of a man
Across the sky . . . patterns and shafts of light . . .
SECOND SENTRY:
It blurs.
FIRST SENTRY:
It's gone.
SECOND SENTRY:
How clear the stars are after! As if the air
Had been rinsed.
FIRST SENTRY:
Suddenly it went over. Suddenly
Like a blind peeled back the night revealed its passage . . .
SECOND SENTRY:
What do you mean? What is it?
FIRST SENTRY:
If I knew
I'd board a ship, I'd put
The breathing belly of the sea
Between me and this land.

The mood is established. The place is Arthurian Britain—partly to make timeless the apparent timeliness of the action, partly to employ a legend which belongs to the guilt-heritage of Western man—but the language is today's. The superbly written stage-directions make a daring use of such sound-effects as rumbling lorries, battery fire, and the humming of motors. The suggestion throughout of Malory's silvery twilight and boulder-strewn coasts only enhances our sense of immediacy by adding to it the landscape of an ambiguous dream. Yeats's sense of the power of familiar unadorned words, used freshly so that they explode with unsuspected modern vigor, is here. "The time bursts like a pod." " . . . the time stripped like a bandage." Columns of marching men at night "tasting darkness on the roofs of their mouths."

Since poetry of this calibre has not been seen for some years either in the drama or outside of it, it is impossible not to quote; but it would be unjust to give the impression that "The Destroyers" is a loosely constructed vehicle for notable lines or purple passages. The story itself is too dramatic and loaded with terror to permit of anything but uninterrupted reading.

It is a time of civil wars, following the departure of the Roman conquerors. Arthur, the King, is faced with a conspiracy, the dimensions of which only reveal themselves as the play progresses. Medrawt, the antagonist, and the lover of Arthur's wife, Ginevra, is consumed with a bitter hatred of Arthur, but it is a hatred that passes beyond the bounds of political animosity or jealousy when he discovers that Arthur is his unacknowledged father. Before this is disclosed to him in a moment of fear by his mother, he becomes suspected of a part in the conspiracy, and is shifted by Arthur to a remote part of the kingdom.

—*Bachrach*

Fleming MacLiesh

But what
Shall I do in the North—at that frontier
Where the rock sheers up and the unbearable blue
Curves over the silent ice? I will hear
The wind in the passes above me. I will give
Orders, stage maneuvers, inhabit
An empty expectancy where the question climbs
Perpendicularly upward, and no one comes:
The tinkle of the signal bell in the cold,
A wagon frozen in, a fallen mule
Braying in a crevasse, the companies
Deploying, the blizzard hissing in the spruce.

He goes, and joining with the leaders in the disaffected area, succeeds in undermining Arthur's loyal officers and forcing the king to give battle in unfavorable circumstances. The king's self-confidence disappears in the face of the revelation of the injustice he has been maneuvered into. He feels, when Medrawt's relation to him is discovered, that he has been "damned from the start," but this fatalism is only communicated to his soldiers when they see him no longer capable of action. Like the legionaries of Hitler's totalitarian order today:

They ask only to serve and are willing to accept;
For their sacrifice is a conviction that is not summed up
In the motives, nor in the attached ideals, nor in
The thinking, the intended benefits, the outcome,
But is, in the last, itself, as deep as their living
And beyond argument; and these wait for the order.

Some readers may think that the conclusion, when Arthur and Medrawt meet and destroy each other on the Armageddon-like field of battle, is too pessimistic, inexorable, or Greek. Perhaps for contemporary tastes it is. The author, in addition to being a poet, is a pilot now preparing for a place in our air service. His play was written before and during Munich. His next one may be less cataclysmic. The fact is that most great plays that have survived from the past have been cataclysmic.

It is the moment of the abyss, moment
Of the whirlpool where all things stream . . .

If the outcome of the present world conflict is anything like what we hope, the poet will undoubtedly write a different kind of play, even a different kind of tragedy. But as it is, and since "The Destroyers" is in no sense "promising," we should be grateful for what he has written and see that it is produced on the stage. The theatre, no less than poetry, has long required this kind of revitalization.

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Frost at Sixty-Seven

A WITNESS TREE. By Robert Frost. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1942. 91 *pp.* $2.

Reviewed by STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT

THIS is a beautiful book, serene, observing, and passionate. It has the characteristic music made out of common speech which is one of Mr. Frost's great gifts—no matter where you met a poem like "Come In" you would know it was by Mr. Frost—it has the Yankee taste for philosophic laconics which makes him one of our most indigenous products—but, most of all, it has a lyric force and intensity that shows how a mind may know age without losing youth. Mr. Frost has never written any better poems than some of those in this book. Nor are any of these merely repetitions and rephrasings—as sometimes happens to the later work of a man who has done a good deal of work. There are poems, to be sure, that could fit in earlier books—"To a Young Wretch," for instance, with its very Frostian, "It is your Christmases against my woods"—"Wilful Homing," with its characteristic first line, "It is getting dark and time he drew to a house." But the brief run of notes called "Carpe Diem"—well, there it is, quite perfect in technique, quite different in technique from any of the others, and quite entirely his. Nor will you write a poem like "The Subverted Flower" by being young, old, middle-aged, modern, classical, American, English, or what have you—but when the lightning strikes.

Reviewing such a book is no easy task. What are you going to say of a man who, at sixty-seven, produces work that is both firmer in texture and fresher in impact than that of so many of his juniors? You can recognize the tart individual flavor in such lines as the closing lines of "A Considerable Speck":

> I have a mind myself and recognize
> Mind when I meet with it in any guise.
> No one can know how glad I am to find
> On any sheet the least display of mind.

and wonder, uneasily, if there is a certain advice there for reviewers as well as animalculae. You can read such lines as those which conclude a poem named "The Most of It" and note the precise description, the rising music, so strongly and effortlessly handled till the inevitable close. Or, you can take such a poem as "I Could Give All to Time" and look at it.

> To Time it never seems that he is brave
> To set himself against the peaks of snow
> To lay them level with the running wave,
> Nor is he overjoyed when they lie low
> But only grave, contemplative and grave.
>
> What now is inland shall be ocean isle,
> Then eddies playing round a sunken reef
> Like the curl at the corner of a smile;
> And I could share Time's lack of joy or grief
> At such a planetary change of style.
>
> I could give all to Time except—except
> What I myself have held. But why declare
> The things forbidden that while the Customs slept
> I have crossed to Safety with? For I am There
> And what I would not part with I have kept.

And that is in the great manner of English verse—that is all. It is going to last, it is going to resist breakage. It has Mr. Frost's particular signature on it—*note the tenth line. But it goes* beyond particular signatures.

There are other such poems in the book—such poems as "The Wind and the Rain" in one vein, as "Of the Stones of the Place" and "Trespass" in another. There is a narrative poem which isn't a narrative poem but a philosophic one, doesn't succeed entirely, and yet has half-a-dozen lines which might have come out of "Kilmeny." There is "The Literate Farmer and the Planet Venus" which I can't admire as much as some people do and at least one quatrain "On Our Sympathy with the Under Dog" which I can't admire at all. In other words, out of forty-two poems not all are successful. But the ones that are, by themselves, would make a reputation, though Mr. Frost had written no others.

> I hold your doctrine of Memento Mori
> And were an epitaph to be my story
> I'd have a short one ready for my own.
> I would have written of me on my stone:
> I had a lover's quarrel with the world.

So Mr. Frost at the end of "The Lesson for Today." The statement is *very like him and we are all the richer* for the quarrel. For here is a book to read, a book to remember, and a book that will be part of our inheritance.

The Florentine Twilight Falls on Lincoln Square

By Horace Gregory

AS though I stood at the center of the world,
Gray walls of stone and sky circled the figure
Of Dante cast in bronze, the laurelled head
Among thorned branches of a winter tree:
"Speak to it," said a voice,
"Speak to that stern, sad, staring image of a face
Which seems to lean out of another time
To this late afternoon, the more than human
Pity and grace as though its light had poured
From sunless skies into this wind-swept place
Over gray street, park bench and city square."

"Speak to it," said the voice, "even at the hour
When the clock's eye opens upon men at war;
These streets, unlighted windows and black boughs
Are not unfamiliar to its quiet gaze . . .
Where the ground trembled and grasses wept
It has mused upon lost friends and enemies,
It has witnessed and foreseen
Blood on this earth that feeds the roots of trees,
And beyond the earth into another season
Of day beyond Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall
Held in the golden, dream-filled look of a young girl,
Beyond the passion of the grave,
Beyond the last embrace of death, or birth, or love."

As I heard the voice, I saw the dark face vanish,
Yet knew its presence in the darker air,
The hand-clasped book, the cloak, the bough, the laurel:
Even though earth fail us and the city gone,
We shall know that figure and its fiery star
Floating behind the ceaseless sun and moon.

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Lonely Eminence

BE ANGRY AT THE SUN AND OTHER POEMS. By Robinson Jeffers. New York: Random House. 1941. 156 *pp.* $2.50.

Reviewed by R. ELLIS ROBERTS

WITH the possible exception of Robert Frost, Robinson Jeffers is to a European the most American of contemporary poets. He is in the tradition of Thoreau, of Melville, of Whitman—men who never rejected or imitated European thought and way of life, though they may, at times, claim to transcend it by virtue of a hopeful Americanism. I know that many critics will boggle at the association of Jeffers and hope; but that is only because hope has been too easily confused with a facile optimism, even with the vulgar acceptance of the advertiser's motto "Boost, don't knock!"

Jeffers is no booster for human nature—nor was Jonathan Edwards, nor was, fundamentally, Abraham Lincoln. That one looks for analogues to Jeffers among men who were not poets is evidence of his lonely eminence as a poet. In this new volume, which contains some of his finest and most prophetic work, I am reminded of no other poetry except the later Yeats, another lonely and undeceived poet of our day. When I say "undeceived" I mean Jeffers is never a slave to the popular cant of the market-place or the literary salon. I think he is sometimes self-deceived. When he writes in "Battle":

> It would be better for men
> To be few and live apart, where none could infect another;
> then slowly the sanity of field and mountain
> And the cold ocean and glittering stars might enter their minds

I question immediately, Why think valley and mountain, the heavens or the unpredictable ocean to be saner than man's soul? Is the Amazon or the Mississippi less turbulent and tormented than the difficult, intimate flow of the blood to and from the heart? Does not the blood of man control and color his vision of the natural world? But a poet has a right to his own philosophy, and Robinson Jeffers is, since Lucretius, the greatest poet to accept, in certain moods, a theory of pantheism; though often his view of nature, though it is starker, is not far from the more personal theory of Wordsworth.

The most remarkable work in this book is "The Bowl of Blood." It is a masque of Hitler, and shows him consulting a witch who foretells the future, summoning for him the spirits of Frederick the Great, of Napoleon, and of a friend who was killed in the last war. It is a tense, taut piece of work, packed with imaginative understanding and a rare quality of vision. In it, as in so many of these poems, Jeffers's profound pity for humanity is nobly, sternly expressed. The core of it can perhaps be found in the second Masker's answer to the question "How can one man gather all power? How does a man dare?"

> Listen: power is a great hollow spirit
> That needs a center.
> It chooses one man almost at random
> And clouds him and clots around him and possesses him.
> Listen: the man does not have power,
> Power has the man.

In this Robinson Jeffers comes very near the traditional Catholic doctrine of possession; and in another poem, "Nerves," he asks

> Or is it that we really feel
> A gathering in the air of something that hates
> Humanity; and in that storm-light see
> Ourselves with too much pity and the others too clearly?

Robinson Jeffers has always felt that sinister, envious, encompassing power; and who dare say now, looking at the history of our time, that his vision has been too terrible?

I must not leave this book without calling attention to the tender, pitiful poems in it. They have a dignity and a grave beauty he has never exceeded—the personal "For Una," the lovely memorial for a bull-dog, the poignant beauty of "Two Christmas Cards." No one from the island can read without emotion the first of these with its nostalgic and hopeful refrain:

Robinson Jeffers

> Lichen and stone the gables
> Of Kelmscott watch the young Thames:
> England dies in the storm,
> Dies to survive, and form
> Another and another
> Of the veils under veils of the vanished Englands.

The long narrative poem "Mara" has much of his old skill as a storyteller—here he has no rival except John Masefield—but it has not quite the force or the pace he can give to a story; and there is uncertainty as well as subtlety in his handling of the "deceived and jealous man." The whole book will confirm any intelligent reader that here is one of the few major poets now writing in English, a man who has his narrownesses and his obliquities but who is fit to sit down, as Yeats desired to sit, with "Landor and John Donne," for he has clung, as they, obstinately to his creed:

> Yet I believe truth is more beautiful
> Than all the lies, and God than all false gods.

The Sheathed Anger

By Dilys Bennett Laing

ALL who love each other
walk in the green woods
delicately away
from the cruel sportsmen.

They do not look for death.
They look for life
and they wear trees of horn
proudly like crowns
on their balanced heads.

Peace is their food,
and grass and all quiet things
their grace.
But hard in the herd
as veins of diamond
the unreckoning valor
of the angry buck.

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Seven American Poets

THE COLLECTED POEMS OF LEW SARETT. New York: Henry Holt & Company. 1942. 383 *pp.* $3.

SHAKESPEARE IN HARLEM. By Langston Hughes. With Drawings by E. McKnight Kauffer. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1942. 124 *pp.* $2.50.

FIVE YOUNG AMERICAN POETS. Second Series, 1941. *Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions.* 218 *pp.* $2.50.

Reviewed by ALFRED KREYMBORG

IN his charming foreword to Lew Sarett's "Collected Poems," Carl Sandburg declares: "We have too many orderly, respectable, synthesized poets in the United States and in England." And Carl proceeds to call Lew a loon and Lew proceeds to fulfill the compliment by writing in "the loam and the lingo, the sand and the syllables of North America." The handsome book is composed of poems written from 1914 to 1930 and Sarett declares in advance: "It is no accident that the dominant traits of the American are his independence, his individualism, his forthrightness, his rebellion against restraints, and his passion for freedom." Such a statement will not find favor these days in classrooms conducted by metaphysical solons, a number of whom are poets who carry on the torch of "The Wasteland" and who, while unable to ape the genius of Eliot, have succeeded in indoctrinating their students with a love of the metaphysical British past, and with an adoration of obscurities, cross-word puzzles, and other intellectual games. Individualism, forthrightness, simplicity, clarity—these are taboo and we are asked to become born classicals and to disown the whole pre-war group of 1914 of which Lindsay and Sandburg were romantic pioneers and Sarett a youthful follower.

The work of the Evansville poet (himself a professor now) is indicative of the enduring quality of any good poetry regardless of causes or arguments. In his poems of love, passion, and tenderness, of the vanishing Indian and vanishing white pioneer, of animals in the traps of nature or human nature (a favorite theme throughout), Sarett is always certain of his material and equally certain in the handling of that material. His perceptions are sound; his clarity never grows obvious; and in handling "the language of every-day life" he is following the precepts of the hard-headed Aristotle. There is more than one tradition for modern poetry. It is not all English, it is not all French, nor one kind of English, one kind of French. Nor is it all Greek; it might even be American or Indian. Lew Sarett has been successful in investing natural themes and forms with his own robust character, his own love of freedom and hatred of oppression, and with the patient hand and musical ear of the artist.

A new volume by Langston Hughes, with delightful drawings by E. McKnight Kauffer, is a lively event in these troubled times. He calls his "Shakespeare in Harlem" a book of light verse—"Blues, ballads and reels to be read aloud, crooned, shouted, recited, and sung. Some with gestures, some not—as you like. None with a far-away voice." The intimate relation with the old music halls is a happy reminder of such mastersingers of vaudeville as Bert Williams and Eddie Leonard. For here is no highbrow verse, no heavy thinking, and nothing low-born either. The careless reader might easily fall into the error of thinking that these delicate notes and rhythms are funny or gay. It is only the skilful surface that is funny or gay; the heart of the matter is tragic. Rarely in our poetry do we find this subtle blending of tragedy and comedy. It is an exquisite art and a difficult one. The salient character behind the verse of Langston Hughes is social and sociable. And he has the perfect gift of writing quatrains with more than one meaning or overtone. "Wake" is a tiny thing with the broadest connotations.

Lew Sarett

James Laughlin, editor of the many New Directions publications, deserves a large volume of credit for confining his principal energy to an art usually neglected in peace-time or wartime—poetry. And in fighting and financing the cultural battles of a younger generation at a time when the five continents and the seven seas are devoted to Mars or to self-defense, Mr. Laughlin reveals a spirit that is patriotic in the finest sense of the word. In "Five Young American Poets—Second Series" he introduces the work of poets under thirty who have not yet issued a volume: Paul Goodman, Jeanne McGahey, Clark Mills, David Schubert, and Karl Shapiro. Under this novel arrangement, each poet has a book of his own, preceded by a personal foreword or essay on poetry, and a facsimile of one of his manuscripts. Everybody these days seems to be writing criticism in frank or veiled support of his private methods of working. The process began with Eliot twenty years ago. I don't know how wise such a process is in the long run since it often degenerates into criticism of criticism. In the present volume I enjoyed most of all Schubert's modest opening sentence: "A poet who observes his own poetry ends up, in spite of it, by finding nothing to observe, just as a man who pays too much attention to the way he walks, finds his legs walking off from under him."

The Brooklyn poet is truly a Brooklyn Dodger delighting in the circus of life and giving that delight the language and music of "the peasantry." In the work of Paul Goodman, we find another traditional vein worthy of present development—the themes and cadences of the Old Testament. His miracle play for dancers, "Cain and Abel," has a subtle simplicity befitting the dramatic argument that Abel, in his brother's eyes, was the true lamb of God and therefore the greatest sacrifice Cain could offer the Lord. Comic and ironic relief is deftly supplied by a shrewd Chorus. Jeanne McGahey's "The White Box" is another contribution to the growing field of poetic drama and will doubtless find ultimate production in our backward theaters. This play about witches has a rollicking reality and a magical surprise ending. In her nature poems there is a keen perception allied to an imagistic style that reminds one of Robinson Jeffers. Clark Mills is the most brilliant and most scholarly member of the new quintette, and is equally at home in the Symbolist poets of France and the poetry of Eliot and Pound, Stevens and Marianne Moore. He has made the best of his influence by adding a decided personality of his own. On the whole, my favorite in the volume is Karl Shapiro, the angry man at the close with his savage satires on a number of contemporary reactionaries. These will have to be shot away along with our foreign enemies. In this respect Shapiro is an able soldier and his aim unerring. He is now at Camp Lee, Virginia.

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The Poet's Workshop

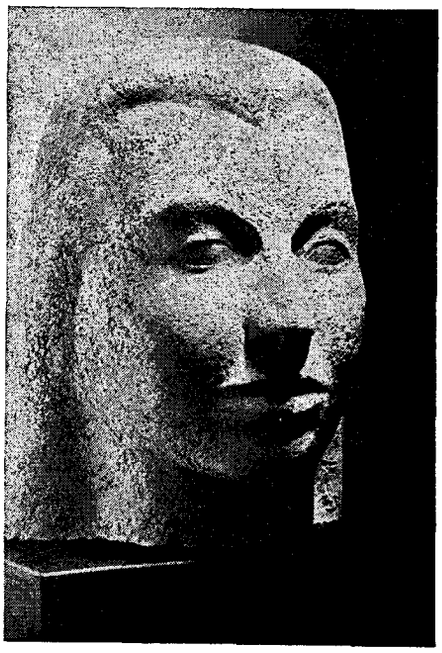
Lockwood Memorial Library

C. D. ABBOTT

MANUSCRIPTS of nearly twenty-five hundred contemporary poems in English—not just "fair copies" in the authors' characteristically elegant or inelegant hands, but the actual work-sheets which have recorded stage by stage the composition of individual poems, these constitute the core of the Poetry Collection which the Lockwood Memorial Library of the University of Buffalo has been amassing. The collecting began in 1935. The library building, a gift to the university from Mr. Thomas B. Lockwood, had been formally opened in May of that year. Not only was there plenty of space, but there was also every physical aid to the care and preservation of rare books: a well-protected strong-room, dustproof cases, admirable exhibition-rooms, and all the gadgets which are necessary or useful to the expert bibliophile. Mr. Lockwood, himself a book-collector, took pains to provide the best of everything. Within a few months of the building's dedication, the pleasant task of acquiring first editions in the field of modern poetry had begun. The aim was to provide and to make accessible to scholars the textual history in printed form of significant modern poetry. For this it was necessary to have not only the first printings, whether in magazine or book form, but also all later editions which embodied revisions or additions of any kind. Slowly but persistently this collecting has gone on until now the printed books aggregate nearly ten thousand, and include in their number most of the usually coveted rarities, such as W. B. Yeats's "Mosada," Robert Frost's "A Boy's Will," Ezra Pound's "A Lume Spento," and Carl Sandburg's "In Reckless Ecstasy."

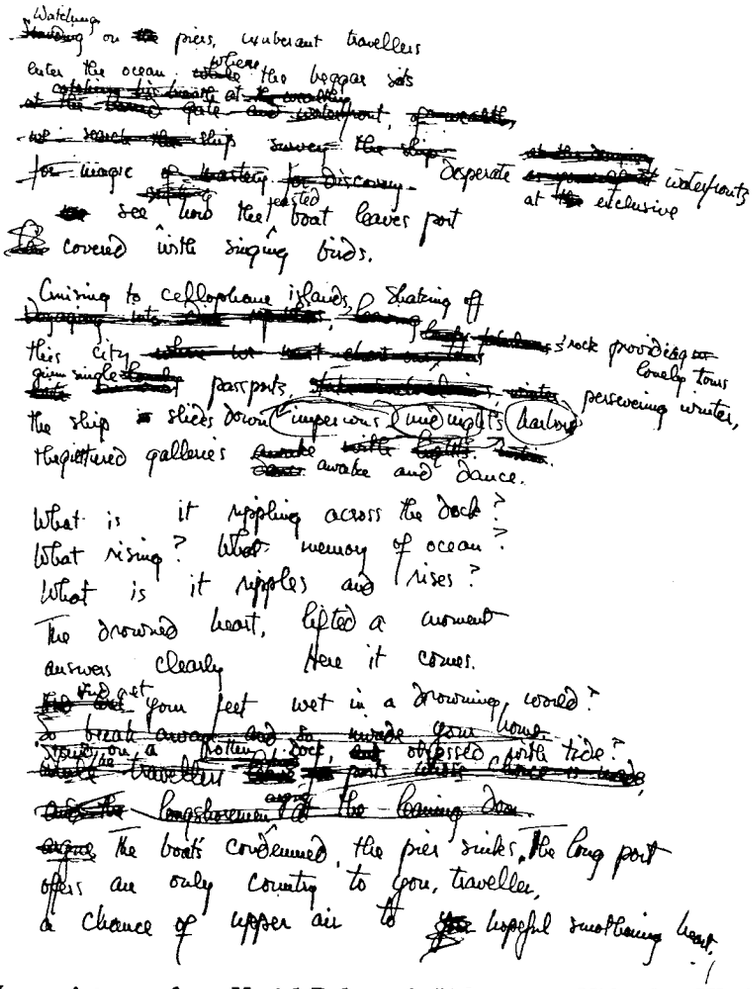
The textual history of a poem after it has seen print is, however, much less interesting, much less rewarding to the student than would be its textual history during the process of composition. Could palpable evidence of the poem's origin and growth be found? Would it not be possible, with the cooperation of living poets, to provide the scholar of the future with the full record? Could I, as the librarian in charge of this collection, persuade the poets to contribute such materials? I believed it could be done, and my faith has been justified. It has been, and will, I hope, continue to be, a long and delightful labor. There have been some failures, but the successes have outnumbered them twenty to one.

Our first hesitant requests went out to a few poets in the fall of 1936. Their response was interested, generous to a degree we had not expected. Almost without exception they had appreciated the value of what we were trying to do, had foreseen the benefits that the successful achievement of our purpose would bring to future scholars, and had agreed to deposit with us the kind of manuscript materials we considered useful. Considerably emboldened by these returns, we approached more and more poets; the manuscripts began to pour in. The whole undertaking rapidly became so complicated, so expensive in time, energy, and money that, had we not been able to gain the financial assistance of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, we should have found it very nearly impossible to handle the details of acquisition. With this new support, however, it was easy to systematize our activities. I was enabled to go to England for three months and to see personally as many poets as could be fitted into that time. Visits could be paid to a large number of the American poets. It was immediately evident that conversational explanations of our plan were far more fruitful than letters could ever be. Miss Mary Barnard, a young poet of distinction and rare understanding, was secured as curator of the collec-



—*From the sculpture by Edna Guck.*

Muriel Rukeyser



Manuscript page from Muriel Rukeyser's "Adventures, Midnight (III)."

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tion. The purchases of books and magazines could be increased far beyond the Library's unassisted financial capacity. We could equip ourselves to reproduce on microfilm whatever manuscripts, or rarities among the books and periodicals, were needed for research in other seats of learning. All of this has been in process since 1938. Great strides have been made. The book and magazine sections have attained to remarkable completeness. Requests from other libraries and universities for our material have been steadily fulfilled. The manuscripts continue to arrive and, with them, packets of letters which will be of inestimable service to future biographers.

We know now, as we did not know when we began, what constitutes the ideal manuscript. It should not be simply a "fair copy," identical in every comma with the printed version. It should be, and must be if it is to meet the purpose of our project, the genuine work-sheets which the poet has used in the making of his poem—preliminary notes, the first rough draft, the various transitional stages, everything up to and including the final version, with proof sheets if textual changes are there recorded: a complete *dossier* on the composition of that particular poem. It does not matter how untidy or how seemingly illegible these materials are, the capable scholar can usually master their difficulties. Nor does it matter what form they take. Some poets do their thinking with a pencil, others on a typewriter. Such a *dossier* is not only a history of the composition of a particular poem; it is also a factual biography of the poet's mind at work. It is the most nearly perfect tangible exhibit of poetic creativeness we can ever possess. And, as such, it is of tremendous value to the literary scholar, to the teacher, and to the psychologist and philosopher as well.

Every poet, of course, has his own unique way of writing. Some turn in just such *dossiers* as I have described above. Quite often, even for a short lyric, they run to ten or fifteen separate sheets, with each transitional version complete in itself but showing remarkable changes from its predecessor. We have examples, among many others, of very fine poems by Genevieve Taggard, Stephen Spender, and Kenneth Fearing which follow this method, recording in full detail every stage of growth, every tightening of phrase, every strengthening of image. The typist-composer is particularly given to bulky *dossiers,* since his method is usually to continue on one sheet until its mussiness is too bewildering, to copy on the next sheet the lines that have come clean, then to continue on this second sheet with new lines until it too has to be discarded for a third, and so on, to a sixth, eighth, or tenth sheet, until the poem stands whole and ready for revision. Other poets are more economical and get everything, with an infinitude of deletions and additions, onto one sheet, until it becomes a veritable palimpsest. These are harder for the scholar to decipher, but I have yet to see one that cannot be untangled if there is patience and intelligence enough behind the attempt. Even Lord Dunsany's which embody a kind of private shorthand yield to the struggle. W. H. Auden and Robinson Jeffers are examplars (without the shorthand) of this method. Perhaps the most spectacular of this type, however, are the few pages we have of Robert Bridges's "Testament of Beauty," where the trial lines are dimly visable in pencil beneath the inked-over traditional lines, the final corrections being added later, usually in red ink. Some few poets, of whom Robert Frost is one, do the bulk of their editing and revising entirely in their heads and commit nothing to paper until the poem is fledged, except, perhaps, for a minor verbal feather or two.

Sometimes we have to accept incomplete records because important parts have disappeared or have been destroyed. The wastebasket or fireplace has been too tempting to the orderly mind. But these *fragmentaria* we are delighted to acquire, if they include, clearly, a significant fraction of the process—though we always continue to hope that their donor will supply us

(*Continued on page* 14)

John Gillespie Magee, Jr.

PER ARDUA

(To those who gave their lives to England during the Battle of Britain and left such a shining example to us who follow these lines are dedicated.)

They that have climbed the white wilds of the morning;
They that have soared, before the world's awake,
To herald up their fellows to them, scouring
The thin dawn's vast their weary folk might take;

Some that left other words to tell the story
Of high blue battle,-quite young limbs that bled;
How they had thundered up the clouds to glory
Or fallen to ~~an English ploughed blood~~ stained field;

Because my faltering feet would fail I find them
Laughing beside me, steadying the hand
That broke their deadly courage —
yet behind them
The cold light dies in that once brilliant land...

Be there, who half the quickened pulse can stay,
Whose stern remembered image cools the brow —
Till the far dawn of Victory know only
Night's darkness, and Valhalla's silence now?

(P.S. If anyone should want this please see that it is accurately edited, capitalized, and punctuated.)

J. G. M.
R.A.F.
1941

(Facsimile of Poem by J. G. Magee, Jr., Courtesy of Joseph Auslander, Congressional Library. See Page 18.)

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THE POETS AND THE WAR

THIS issue is devoted to poetry and the cause of poetry. In time of war we believe that poetry has a great deal to give. We have the honor to publish in this issue the original manuscript of a poem by a young American airman, which came to his parents in a letter after he had been shot down. It illustrates the fact —as did also his former widely-quoted poem "High Flight," written after piloting a Spitfire at 30,000 feet—that poetry plays a part wherever heroism and exaltation are in the air. The horrors of war are well-known, but there is this other side as well.

At the end of the last war, Siegfried Sassoon was without doubt the poet who spoke best for England and for an exhausted world that had somehow survived its first experience of the modern holocaust. His poems were bitterly ironic, and truthful. He stripped all glamour from the face of war. He wrote of the dugout and the counter-attack as the soldiers actually knew them. He was a brave officer himself, and decorated for bravery in the field. His last word upon war was

Have you forgotten yet? . . .
Look up, and swear by the green of the Spring that you'll never forget!

We have not forgotten. England had not forgotten. It is still a question how large a part a profound desire for peace played in those desperate sequential moves of "appeasement." We have learned one thing, though. We have learned that prompt and firm action in time may not only prevent shameful appeasement, but may also prevent the horrors of war. We have learned that you cannot be asleep at the switch, just because you think war ought to be outlawed. We still admire Sassoon's attitude toward war which, as he said *is* "a bloody game," however you view it. But at the same time it is neither idle nor base to die for one's country in a struggle like the present one, and we need the poets to give us a few rousing songs to march by. They need not be boastful songs, nor need they be songs of hate. But they should be songs with what has been called "the real intestines"—not to use the plain word *guts*.

Even a bad cause may be graced by a good song. We have never admired John Graham, but when Scott wrote a song to the air of "The Bonnets of Bonny Dundee," he wrote *something*—even if we do not regard the Covenanters as canting nor the Stuarts as God's anointed.

He waved his proud hand, and the trumpets were blown,
The kettle-drums clash'd, and the horsemen rode on,
Till on Ravelston's cliffs and on Clermiston's lee,
Died away the wild war-notes of Bonny Dundee.

If the above be true, how about songs in a *good* cause? Never has nation had a better cause than we at this day! But the poets are still busy writing careful interior complicated verse that the average man can make neither head nor tail of, and that has no pith for men who are facing grim reality overseas.

This may all be construed as fire-breathing; though it is not. Jingoistic rhodomontade is not to be welcomed. There is nothing jingoistic about our part in this war. We have been set back on our heels at the start. But when, for instance, we read of a gallant exploit, like that of Brigadier General Ralph Royce and his baker's dozen of bombers on their 4,000 mile jaunt, you would think the good versemen would be falling over each other to say something about it. Actually they would probably politely shudder. One epithet used against Kipling by a recent young English writer in an advanced journal was "vulgar." I am not defending Kipling's imperialism (that is always the charge) though he knew more about India, at that, than a good many seem to know today. I am merely saying that the epithet *vulgar* appears to me just too, too ultraviolet. War is vulgar. Life is vulgar! It is about the most vulgar pursuit known to mankind! It is also full of the highest gallantry. And there has been enough simple heroism exhibited already in the present war, and by civilians as well as soldiers, to make one eternally proud of the human race.

What kind of poems then are to be the war poems of today? That is up to the poets. But one thing is sure. To anyone with imagination the world revolution of today—and it is no less —dares poetry to cope with it. This struggle is the most striking of challenges to the spirit of Man. In the end, I believe the poets will be equal to it. There have been great American war poems. Our late Civil War had several. Henry Howard Brownell wrote in action "The River Fight" and "The Bay Fight." William Henry Thompson wrote "The High Tide at Gettysburg:"

God lives! He forged the iron will
That clutched and held that trembling hill.
God lives and reigns! He built and lent
The heights for Freedom's battlement
Where floats her flag in triumph still!

The verse after that, honors both the blue and the gray, but the drum-roll of that poem, the fact that it still can move and thrill one, is the point I am trying to make.

The poetry of today is different in manner and method. But the inspiration of poetry is something men particularly need in hours of trial—no sickly sentimental stuff—God save the mark!—but the authentic accent of great verse. That is something poets can give to their country, and produce for humanity, in this crisis.

W. R. B.

Sonnet

By Sara Henderson Hay

WHEN I, with bitter tongue, denounce those crimes
Which man commits against his fellow men,
And say he makes a shambles of the times,
And list his evil deeds again, again;
Cry he is ruthless to achieve his ends,
Say he is cruel and greedy and unwise,
That he betrays his honor and his friends—
At my own door the accusation lies.

For I am part of the great body of Man
And in my breast there lodges all I blame,
Diminished merely in its scope and span,
In its essential qualities the same.
Between the world's and my own sins I find
The differences of degree, not kind.

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Questions and Gambols

HERE I STAND. By John Beecher. New York: Twice A Year Press. 1941. 42 *pp.* $1.50.

STOP-LIGHT. Five Dance Poems. By Paul Goodman. Harrison Park, N. J.: 1941. 93 *pp.* $2.

Reviewed by DUDLEY FITTS

"HERE I Stand," which seems to be a fragment from a dull autobiographical poem, interests me chiefly as an exercise in platitudinous diction. There is a drunk "lurching and weaving"; tractors are "pitiless as tanks"; Fifth Avenue has "acres of plate glass"; one is aware "in blood and bone"; the "sharp edge of disbelief" is "the ax at the root of faith"; iteration is "like a victrola record caught in one groove"; the present crisis is "this time of times," and so on. There are many passages of revelation that call for brief marginal comment: thus, against "But it's really September / October comes next and then all of November" I would write "Yes"; informed that "two couples appear / making with us / three couples," I can say only "check"; and to the conclusion of Part X—"I salute you / race humaine"—the courteous response seems to be "Hi-ya, Mr. Whitman!" The flatness of the diction (I have not the space to demonstrate the flatness of the unversification) faithfully mirrors the flatness of the narrative. Big scenes and little scenes, interpreted by the mirthless ego of the protagonist, become equally non-scenes. Fruitless journeys; visits to Washington; sterile conversations with a gent who is at least thrice identified, with a coyness whose reason eludes me, as "the man with a month for a name"; a near-fight with a drunk in the subway; a declaredly mirthful episode in which a married couple ("after sixteen years / fifteen in lawful wedlock / with christened children four") are taken for "adulterers" and refused a room; the whole culminating in the author's putting himself upon the slave-block ("Do I hear any bids?") . . . I have found six briefly successful passages in the poem, the best of them, on page 31, being one unfit for quotation in a decorous journal. Otherwise, "Here I Stand" strikes me as being a humorless waste of at least forty pages of paper that might have been more usefully consumed.

George Barker

Mr. Goodman's five dance poems are more engaging, although only two of them—"The Three Disciplines" and "The Stop Light"—seem adequately to realize the author's ambitious intention. This intention is to create an American equivalent of the Japanese *Noh*-play; but, as is true of so many of the recent Latin-American experiments with the *hai-kai,* or *hokku,* the genre is radically so alien to any but its own language and tradition that the infrequent success in it is separated by only a hair's breadth from embarrassing preciosity. Mr. Goodman's short preface is interesting factually, philosophically rather pretentious. His purpose, to adapt the three *personae* of the *Noh*—the *Waki,* the *Shite,* and the *Chorus*—to the corresponding *Audience, Object of Awareness,* and *Mind of the Poet Himself,* is an engaging one which should have worked out better than it has. His three failures are partly due to the fact that the protagonist, the Object of Awareness, is either a dismal truism (as in "The Birthday") or a downright silliness (as in "Dusk" and "The Cyclist"). It is true that the protagonist of "The Three Disciplines" is also a truism, and a pretty bald one at that; but the energy of the language and the symbolic inventiveness of the dancer save it from collapse. Only in "The Stop Light" is there a complete integration of diction, symbol, and idea; and the result is as moving, I think, as so stylized a thing can ever be. There is a very pretty informal humor in all the pieces, and not the least effective device is the location of such esoteric episodes in places like Tenafly, Teaneck, and Amber Lake. The diction, too, is flat—as flat, often, as Mr. Beecher's. But there is this difference: when Mr. Goodman introduces a character saying "Is this the home / of Esther, cousin on my mother's side?", one senses, in the clash between the prosaic question and the mystic gambols about to ensue, the poet's laughter. Mr. Beecher would have written it with a straight face.

George Barker's Exuberance

SELECTED POEMS. By George Barker. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1941. 149 *pp.* $1.90.

UNHAPPILY I opened this otherwise admirable book to a poem called "The Death of Yeats," the first line of which—"That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented face"—so convulsed me that therein that day I read no more. Having once guyed a splendid Yeats line myself (though, I think, with a somewhat hardier intention), and having been spanked for it in these very columns, I am diffident about commenting upon Mr. Barker's parody. Yet it does seem to me that the error of taste that permits dorsal fins to navigate about in a human face is the kind of error that vitiates too many of the poems in this collection. There are splendid details—there is scarcely a page at which attention is not held by some miracle of craftsmanship—, but the poet's exuberance has a way of getting so out of hand that organization is lost in a series of brilliant explosions. This is not true of the best poems in the book—the "Seven Munich Elegies," for instance, which are perfectly controlled—, but it is true of the "Holy Poems," exercises in the Frantic Manner ("Nimrod, hung like God's scalp on Time's bosom / Warns me without words to keep from blood"), precisely a kind of renovated Pistolese. And it is true of less intense poems, such as the "American Odes"—poems which are almost perfunctory, evading the commonplace by indulging a kind of forced rhetoric, as though Mr. Barker had said "Go to, a poem is wanted." It is when he is not wanting a poem, but making a poem, that he emerges in his true stature: in the "Requiem Anthem for the Austrian Constitution," the last two "Pacific Sonnets," the "Elegy on Spain," and the "Munich Elegies" which I have mentioned. For these pieces one can only be humbly grateful.

D. F.

M. Fogelson of the Beacon Book and Gift Shop of New Britain, Connecticut, asks for suggestions from readers for books of the "Mutiny on the Bounty" and "Captain Horatio Hornblower" type for boys in the Service. They have been asked for these types of books so much lately that they would appreciate a list (if there is such a listing).

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THE POET'S WORKSHOP

(*Continued from page* 11)

later with complete *dossiers*. We like, too, to have more than one poem in the file of each author; the desirable goal is a group of characteristic poems from each period, if such periods are to be ascertained, of each poet's activity. Many poets are already represented by twenty to thirty, some by even more, and most of those who have thus far contributed only one have promised to remit other examples as their work provides them. Nor do we confine ourselves to one type of verse. It is, perhaps, natural that serious poetry should be in the preponderance, but that does not mean that light and comic verse is excluded. The mental processes behind the making of the "Bab Ballads" or Lear's limericks would be of extreme interest, were such collections as ours able to furnish them. We are glad that Phyllis McGinley and Ogden Nash have their honored places in our files. Translations too are important; they often exhibit an entirely different aspect of the creative intelligence, and illustrate the search for verbal exactitude more strikingly than the original poem.

Here, then, out of these materials is building a work-room for the genuine student of poetry, a work-room which we think is already well-equipped to satisfy most of his needs, and which we hope will improve as new manuscripts are given, as the gaps in the books and periodicals fill up, as it becomes the depository for collections of revelatory letters such as those from Sara Teasdale, Vachel Lindsay, and Amy Lowell which Louis Untermeyer, with great friendliness, recently presented to us. Poetry has always been one of the surest guides to the thought and culture of an age. There is no period in the world's history the poetry of which has not yielded to many kinds of scholar (the literary, the historical, the philosophic, the sociological, even the scientific) clues to the proper understanding and knowledge of that period. The poets have always been the inspired commentators upon the conditions of their own times, the prophets of social and intellectual change still to come. Their minds are a constant source of information to every kind of investigator. We see no reason to suppose that the future scholar will find the poets of our peculiarly tortured twentieth century less indicative of their times than were the poets of former centuries. When the day comes that this hypothetical scholar of the future can explain the intricacies of our age's poetic thought, we hope that our work will have provided him with the materials he most needs. And he can thank, most of all, the poets who have so generously given their manuscripts to his learning.

By Our Brief Light

By Raymond Holden

NONE knows the nature of the thoughts of dust
But all the thoughts of man are out
And live in them he must
Though in the mind of dust they stand in doubt.
We know our world as something in the hand,
Weapon or shield at shift of our command.

Grass is a name for growing, as is man,
And grass a name for dying, too.
All things that are, began
And so will end, though no end be in view.
We are a state of being, not an end,
A means of spending, not a thing to spend.

That which made earth was neither good nor ill
And had no home for man in mind,
Nor rules to curb his will.
Yet here is man, shrewd-fingered and strong-spined,
Partitioning earth and striking with his rod
Where that is wanted which is new to God.

We know that like a planet, flesh so made
Must in its orbit's time be done
And, shuttling light and shade,
Go once again through change long undergone.
Therefore, although confederate and complete
We hear the heart-beat parliament vote defeat.

A tongue of sun, tempered in bitterness,
Strikes the earth's metal, thick and cold,
Marking one day the less
Upon the list of those our hopes foretold.
We know the quieting of the measure breath
Is nearer, the long retrospect of death.

In this defeat, this certain imperfection,
We who are earth's are lapped and bound.
Despite the mind's election,
Despite the height of heads above the ground,
The downward pull of earth must soon expel
Passion and thought that loved and served us well.

It is no treachery, thus to deprive
The borrower of his loan, to trust
The use of it to thrive
And give a hue of permanence to our rust.
The one betrayal is to think death cruel
And breath, being doomed to end, a waste of fuel.

Look at our world wherein, while seeming free
The scattered cells of persons make
One wide identity
Stronger than men whom single death can break.
Our selves, that time and reason part and kill,
As men in man, in what we thought live still.

The sin and single evil of mankind
Is to find living difficult;
To nourish in the mind
Reluctance and its ruinous result;
To sleep—since darkness is man's destiny—
Through the brief light; being, to fear to be.

He who would bow because death threatens him
Must, since death stands on either side,
Find even the cradle grim.
Yet in our widened bed we have not died.
Death is about us and our thoughts not done.
The hours are few but still are more than none.

Over and over, as the racing earth
Weaves light with dark and dark with light,
The fearful hour named birth
Will keep returning. It is here tonight.
Lose what we may, it is but blood we shed.
The torn flesh has another heart and head.

Here, with the peak of color clouded now
We stand and listen to the strike
Of evil at the brow,
Knowing, since we are men, what death is like,
Knowing that man, who cannot prove his cause,
By our brief light, must read tomorrow's laws.

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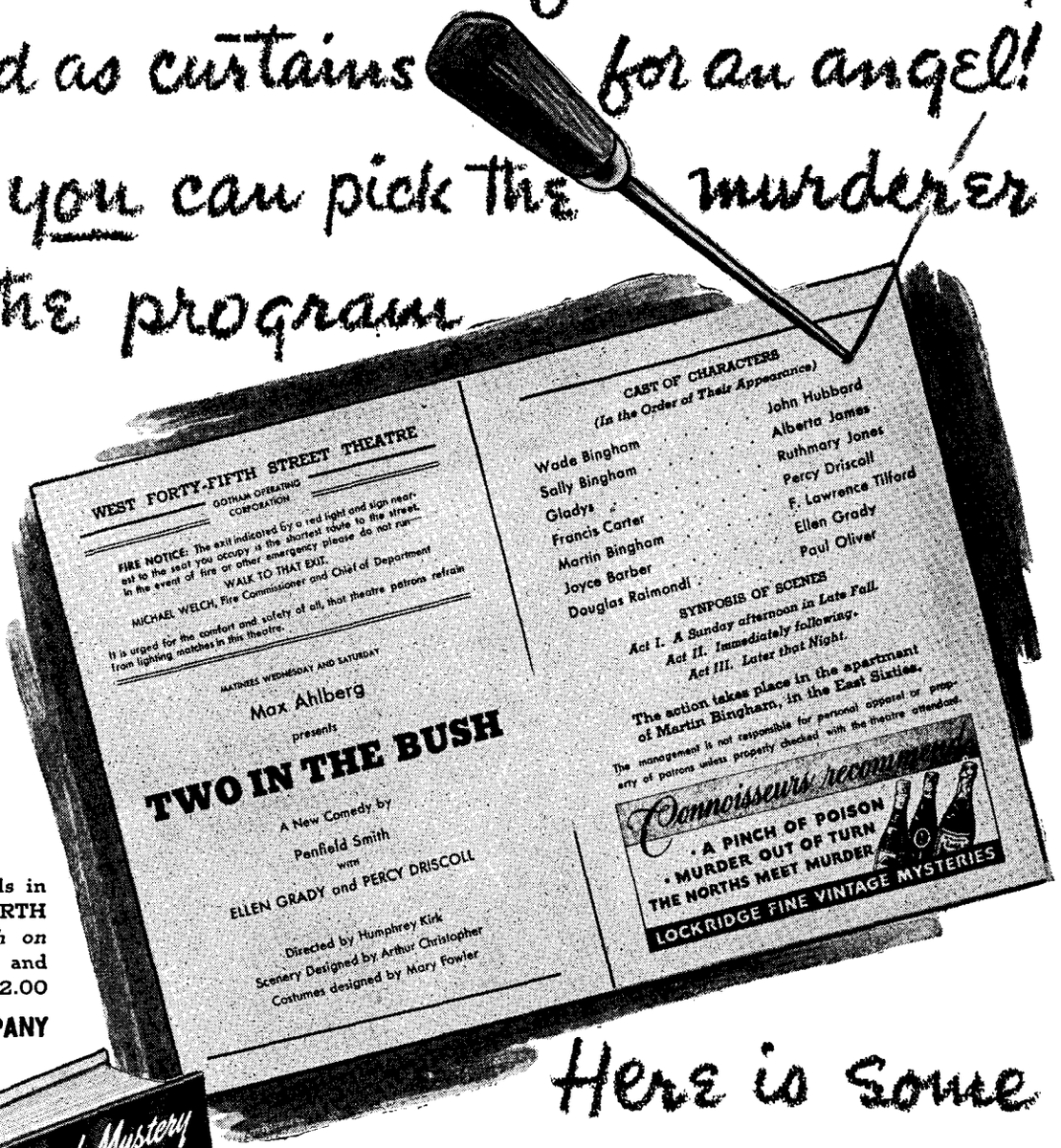
It began as a rehearsal for a new comedy. It ended as curtains for an angel! See if you can pick the murderer from the program — Pam North did!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A New Comedy by
Penfield Smith
with
ELLEN GRADY and PERCY DRISCOLL
Directed by Humphrey Kirk
Scenery Designed by Arthur Christopher
Costumes designed by Mary Fowler
CAST OF CHARACTERS
(In the Order of Their Appearance)
Wade Bingham — John Hubbard
Sally Bingham — Alberta James
Gladys — Ruthmary Jones
Francis Carter — Percy Driscoll
Martin Bingham — F. Lawrence Tilford
Joyce Barber — Ellen Grady
Douglas Raimondi — Paul Oliver
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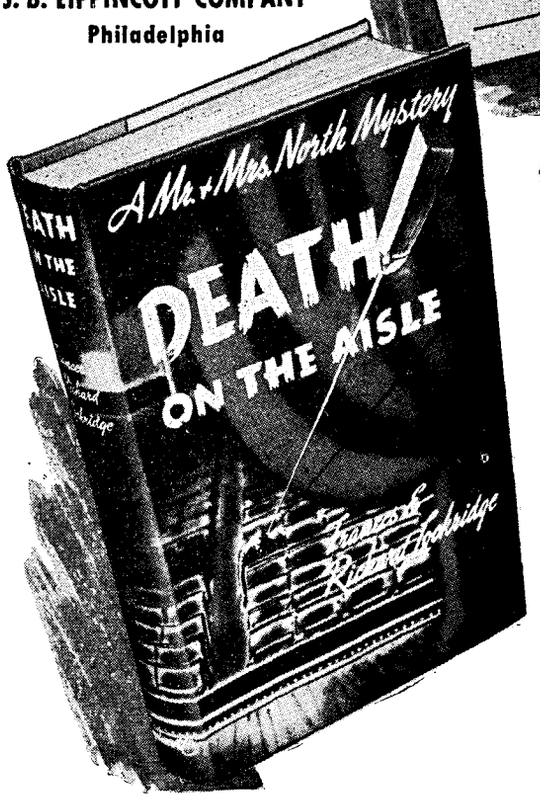

Here is some dope about the suspects:

Penfield Smith: author of "Two in the Bush"—mild of manner and voice—nervously polishing his glasses and expressing, immediately and frankly, a hatred of the slain man — for his interference with the play.

Humphrey Kirk: lanky, red-headed director whose job puts him all over the darkened theater during rehearsals. His deep emotional interest in one of the cast is at once apparent to Pam North—

Alberta James: another red-head but feminine, very! Lovely and large-eyed and worried. A starlet—with secrets.

John Hubbard: the Juvenile male lead—and looks it—who noticed the cigarette end glaring in the right aisle where the play's "angel" was murdered.

Arthur Christopher: who designed the scenery—and whom Sergeant Mullins finds very funny, indeed. Plump, pale and depressed.

Max Ahlberg: the producer — who cares about the play and needs, badly, a financial success—cheerful and thickset and a favorite on Broadway.

Mary Fowler: who designed the costumes—a vibrant voice and strange, protruding eyes.

Percy Driscoll: the Perfect Successful Actor—hero of the play—suavely stage-British and conciliatory—who said Dr. Carney Bolton (the corpse) had been a "very dear friend."

F. Lawrence Tilford:—actor of the old school—in his sixties—who had played with Booth (so *he* said).

Ellen Grady: the beautiful feminine lead—slight and blonde—appealing instantly to the male in men.

Ruthmary Jones: truly British West Indian, dark-faced and humorous—the colored maid in the play.

Paul Oliver: blond, young, broad of shoulder — actor who battles with Ellen Grady about stage positions.

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Lyric Craftsman

OUT OF THE JEWEL. Poems. By Rolfe Humphries. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1942. 126 *pp.* $2.50.

Reviewed by SELDEN RODMAN

ROLFE HUMPHRIES, among the small company of genuine lyric craftsmen in America today, stands near the top. He is not close to the rural community like Robert Frost, or to cities and backways like Carl Sandburg or Jesse Stuart. He does not have the eccentric, piquant imagination of Marianne Moore; the biographical and historical wit of the Benéts; nor that disdain for content, clarity, and sometimes even form, affected by many of the younger disciples of Auden and Dylan Thomas. Though entirely individual in tone and subject, his work most nearly calls to mind the lyrics of John Peale Bishop and Louise Bogan, artists content with a small canvas, subtle, personal, eschewing the sensational gesture and the platform manner, but at their best capable of definition and music quite beyond the operatic range of the Swinburnes and Edna St. Vincent Millays.

It is in such poems as "Episode in Elysium," "New Jersey Eclogue," and "Dialectical Round" that Rolfe Humphries touches these heights.

> The stone that weights the arch,
> The cable men unreel,
> Provoke the winds that moan,
> Provide the winds that search
> The filaments of steel
> In search of something flown
> Beyond the roar of torch,
> Beyond the turn of wheel,
> Beyond the weight of stone.

But such suggestive compactness is sacrificed, word magic ("The lake darkens . . . the lark wakens," etc.) is abandoned in the few poems of this book which reach out self-consciously for the political audience. Successful poems in this genre demand a violence and an ease with the vernacular which the lyricist does not possess. Almost all of the rest of the poems come off—and brilliantly. "Lyric with Ambiguous References" comes dangerously close to conceit, and "Belated Valentine" is marred by clichés ("blue intensity," "blood and bone," "lunar chill") but these stand out only because they are the exceptions.

It is regrettable that Scribners, one of the few remaining publishers with the courage to publish poetry by poets who haven't promised to write a novel, should perpetrate the kind of back-jacket blurb "Out of the Jewel" has. It is abundantly clear from a reading of Mr. Humphries's verse that he is no dilettante or recluse. Is it necessary, simply because he is at home in Spanish, German, and Latin as well as English, to apologize for his profession by trying to make him out a ballplayer and a race-track tout? And suppose he is? Since when haven't poets been gamblers and handy with their mitts? Even that Prince of the Ivory Tower, Pound, has a creditable backhand. Rolfe Humphries writes fine poems—that should be enough for Scribners to talk about.

The Trade Book Clinic of the American Institute of Graphic Arts has named three books as its April Selections. Each month a competent committee chooses those new titles which best coordinate imaginative or purposeful design with sound execution. To become acquainted with the finest in current book format and typography, the public is invited to examine these selections at any book store:

"Beyond the Solar System," by Bertha Morris Parker (Harper & Brothers).

"Inside Benchley," by Robert Benchley (Harper & Brothers).

"The Undiscoverables," by Ralph Bates (Random House).

CITADEL: POETRY IN THE NATIONAL LIBRARY

(*Continued from page 4*)

upon and reprinted by hundreds of newspapers throughout the country, and by many magazines. We were fortunate in being able to borrow the manuscript of this and a hitherto unpublished poem by the young flyer, "Per Ardua," to add to our exhibition of "Poems of Faith and Freedom," side by side with a manuscript of Joyce Kilmer's "The Peacemaker," a photostatic copy of the first draft of Rupert Brooke's "The Soldier," and a copy of *Punch* in which first appeared John McCrae's "In Flanders Fields."

Such poems are directly concerned with man's revolt against oppression and his passion for freedom. They rouse the soul to passionate conviction and determination. Less evident, but perhaps ever more vital, is the function of poetry in war time as spiritual sustenance, regardless of its theme. An excellent poem on a butterfly, such as that by W. H. Davies, or on a placid country scene, such as William Allingham's "Four Ducks on a Pond," will do more to put a drive behind the shoulders and into the diaphragm of the soldier with a bayonet than any amount of the hollow-sounding martial music of jingoistic ballads about hitting Hitler, mussing up Mussolini, and slapping the Jap. Let the mind of man feed upon its proper food, truth, goodness, and beauty, and man is serene and unconquerable.

Mr. Auslander is officially Gift Officer of the Library of Congress. Mr. Kilmer is his assistant.

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Wartime Poems

AWAKE! And Other Wartime Poems. By W. R. Rodgers. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1942. $1.50.

IT is Mark Van Doren who comments upon this poet favorably in saying that here is "the war poet of *this* war." I am not so sure that we can say that yet, though the *New Statesman and Nation* in London think so also. Mr. Rodgers is a young Ulsterman whose work startles at the outset with a modern image of an express-train very well handled. After that, though one recognizes dexterity and real poetic feeling without poeticism, one is never quite so agreeably startled again. Mr. Rodgers can begin his "Snow" poem, for instance, with easy mastery, doing it really, in his own way, as well as the late Robert Bridges did his beautiful one. He can get also "the knock and hiss of cistern" in the house, and how "the thickening cold anchored the skin." But when he ends "The bomb domanial in the dome of blue" it seems a literary exercise in syllables, not a "felt" line. It is a pity, in a way, that W. H. Auden has done these poetic aerobatics so brilliantly. All the other young Britishers have been turning into tumbler pigeons trying to emulate him. It spoils their work, as it very nearly "within touch of a toss" spoiled Auden's. On the other hand, in a shorter poem, emotion has fused method till a poem emerges etched on the memory:

ESCAPE

The roads of Europe are running
away from the war,
Running fast over the mined bridges
and past the men
Waiting there, with watch, ready to
maim and arrest them,
And strong overhead the long snorings of the plane's tracks
Are stretching like rafters from end
to end of their power.
Turn back, you who want to escape
or want to forget
The ruin of all your regards. You
will be more free
At the thoughtless centre of slaughter than you would be
Standing chained to the telephone-end while the world cracks.

That is undoubtedly one of the poems of this war that will endure, and it could only have been written about this war.

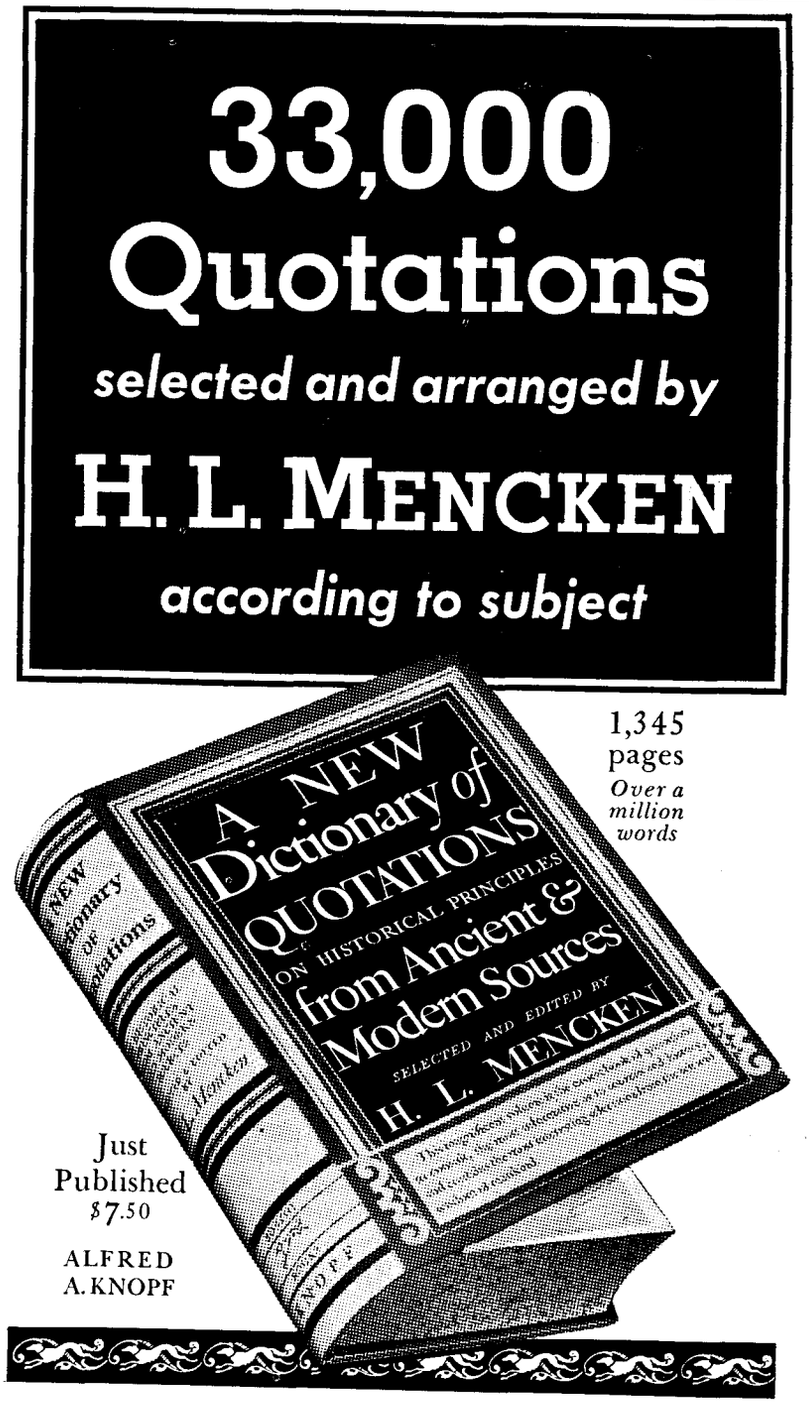
Rex Stout, famous bearded creator of Nero Wolfe, who offered proof in these pages not so long ago that Dr. Watson must have been a woman, made his debut as an actor on the "Celebrity Theatre" program on April 10th. In that program, he had the part of the detective in the play, "Red Wine." Although Mr. Stout is a writer and a speaker of special parts, he has never attempted acting.

In Memoriam Athens, April 1941

By Elizabeth Coatsworth

IT rains today. The fruitless cherry tree
Stands without flower now,
And cherry petals pink the cold wet grasses,
Not the high bough.
Far off in Greece the Germans marched through Athens'
Unstirring throng,
And the dead lay, heaped thick in famous passes
Well known to song.

I know what wind and rain may do together,
Cold wind, cold rain.
Why must I weep that now the storm has shaken
The boughs again?
Why should I weep because courage once more has fallen,
And young men lie
Dead on the grass? Honor again will flower.
It does not die.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Young America Singing

LILLIAN PORTER SAY

YOUNG America singing. Singing and giving wings to the world. That was John Gillespie Magee, Jr., nineteen-year-old Pilot officer in the Royal Canadian Air Force. In September, 1941 he was flying, flying 30,000 feet above the earth while in combat training. As he flew, words sang themselves into his heart. When he returned to earth, he scribbled them on the back of a letter to his mother in Washington and called them "High Flight."

On December 11, 1941 he was killed in active service over Britain. But his all too brief song of gallantry is on its way to immortality. "High Flight" has been placed in all the pilot training centers of the British Empire. It is now the official poem of the British flying forces all over the world. The Library of Congress in the nation's capital has acclaimed Magee the first American poet of the present World War. His works are now on exhibition in the Library in a grouping with Shelley, Rupert Brooke, Alan Seeger, Joyce Kilmer, John McCrae, and many other poets of faith and freedom.

"The moment we read 'High Flight'," says Joseph Auslander, head of the Poetry Division of the Library of Congress, "we knew instantly that here was another voice with a certain universal quality, a certain heroic spirit, a gallantry that ranked it with our best known poets of faith and freedom. We immediately asked permission of Magee's parents to add the works of their son to this exhibit."

And so other young, gallant voices lead back to John Gillespie Magee, Jr., nineteen, American poet of the Second World War. Lead to the photograph of a young man with eager, dark eyes and wings on his cap.

On page eleven of this issue will be found a facsimile of a later poem "Per Ardua," hitherto unpublished:

(To those who gave their lives to England during the Battle of Britain and left such a shining example for us to follow, these lines are dedicated.)

They that have climbed the white
mists of the morning;
They that have soared, before the
world's awake,
To herald up their foemen to them,
scorning
The thin dawn's rest their weary
folk might take;

Some that left other mouths to tell
the story
Of high blue battle,—quite young
limbs that bled;
How they had thundered up the
clouds to glory
Or fallen to an English field stained
red;

Because my faltering feet would fail
I find them
Laughing beside me, steadying the
hand
That seeks their deadly courage—
yet behind them
The cold light dies in that once brilliant land . . .

Do these, who help the quickened
pulse run slowly,
Whose stern remembered image
cools the brow—
To the far dawn of Victory know
only
Night's darkness, and Valhalla's silence now?

Magee was the son of the Rev. and Mrs. John G. Magee, Sr., of 2218 Bancroft Place Northwest, Washington, D. C. The Rev. John G. Magee is assistant rector of St. John's Episcopal church. Magee, Jr., was born in Shanghai while his parents were there as missionaries. The family came to Washington about a year ago from Boston. There are, in addition to Magee's parents, two brothers, Christopher, thirteen, and David, sixteen.

John G. Magee, Jr., attended Avon Old Farms School in Connecticut. Here between the ages of thirteen and sixteen, he wrote and published a book of his own poems. He then went to Britain's famous Rugby school. At the age of eighteen years he won a scholarship to Yale. He returned to America and passed his entrance examinations at the very top, but he never attended Yale. He felt that he must aid the cause of freedom and instead, enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force in September, 1940.

He trained as a flyer in Canada and was one of a graduation class of 57 at the Service Flying Training School, Uplands, Ottawa, and one of twelve out of that class to receive commissions later. He served overseas with an R.C.A.F. Spitfire Squadron until his death on active service last December.

He was six foot in height, but he gave the impression of shyness and seemed always to express himself best in writing. The sixteen-line poem, which I referred to above, was dedicated to his companions, who perished in the Battle of Britain. "Per Ardua" is a phrase taken from the motto of the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Lightly pencilled at the bottom of the holograph copy of "Per Ardua," presented to his mother, is this line: "If anyone should want this please see that it is accurately copied, capitalized, and punctuated."

In March, the Rev. and Mrs. John G. Magee received a plaque from the Canadian Legation. Their son's picture and his poem, "High Flight," mounted by Flight Lieut. H. H. Booth, of the R.C.A.F., on a background of his making, was presented by J. G. Bryans, assistant attache of the legation.

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Ballad on Dunkirk

DUNKIRK. By Robert Nathan. New York: Alfred Knopf. 1942. 45 *pp.* $.50.

Reviewed by JOSEPH JOEL KEITH

THIS admirable ballad tells with the appropriate word, with dignity, and with restraint, the whole story of "Dunkirk." Beneath the calm lines, the simple phraseology, courage and excitement ride. The story begins with the arrival of the boy, Will, from school. He had little to say, but he saw that his boat

> the *Sarah P,*
> Bobbed at the tide on an even keel,
> With her one old sail, patched at the leech,
> Furled like a slattern down at heel.

Robert Nathan has the ability to pack wisdom and drama in simple lines. He brings this out in the attitude of Bess, the boy's sister.

> She had heard the news of the Flanders rout,
> How the English were trapped above Dunkirk,
> And the fleet had gone to get them out—
> But everyone thought that it wouldn't work.
> There was too much fear, there was too much doubt.

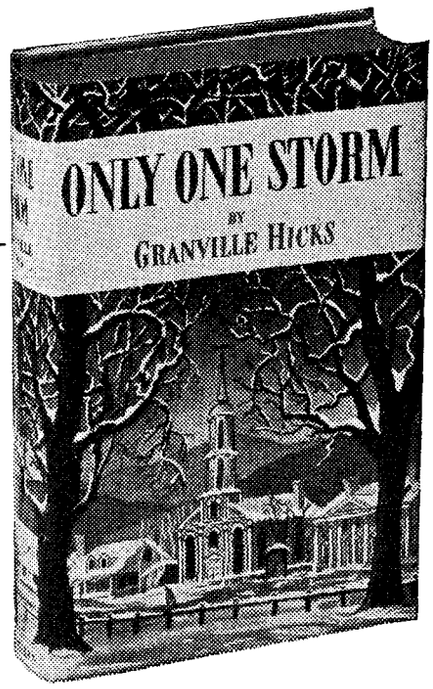
There are excitement, action, and a flowing quality in the lines that tell us of the bravery of the little people in their little boats. Beneath countless dangers, the fog came

> And covered the ships with English mist.
> The diving planes were baffled and blind.

Will, Bess, and the fourteen men brought safely back to England are living, breathing characters. There is the very real feel of the sea in the ballad. And "Dunkirk" will live after this war is over; this thin book will still be thumbed and rethumbed long after the thick, sensational books of the day are thrown into dusty corners.

Winifred Welles's Poems

This summer E. P. Dutton & Co. will publish posthumously the last volume of poems by the late Winifred Welles, one of the most distinguished women poets of our time. Seven hundred and fifty copies of the book will be published altogether, four hundred of which will be turned over to subscribers and the rest sold by Dutton's. This is an unusual item by a very rare poet, whose death was a severe loss to our literature.



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POEMS

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Five Male Poets

TUMULTUOUS SHORE. By Arthur Davison Ficke. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1942. 110 *pp.* $2.

THE SONG OF JED SMITH. By John G. Neihardt. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1942. 113 *pp.* $1.90.

WEST OF MIDNIGHT. By Paul Engle. New York: Random House. 1941. 96 *pp.* $2.

THE MIND'S GEOGRAPHY. By George Zabriskie. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1941. 106 *pp.* $2.

THE BLACK BULL. By C. F. MacIntyre. Prairie City, Illinois: The Press of James A. Decker. 1941. 111 *pp.* $2.50. *Frontispiece by Rockwell Kent.*

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

ARTHUR DAVISON FICKE'S first work appeared even before the years we speak of loosely as the American Poetic Renaissance, before the late World War. Mr. Ficke is a veteran poet, with much fine work to his credit, accomplished in the sonnet and in the quieter metres. He is a persuasive philosopher, seeking earnestly for a meaning to life, which he has found merely in what we call nature. He expresses this philosophy clearly and gracefully in his sonnets. His Forty-Fifth Sonnet has appeared in *The Saturday Review of Literature,* and is one of the best. I do not always agree with Mr. Ficke's conclusions, nor do I always think his phraseology as fresh as it might be. But his poetry is instinct with beauty. Such poems as "Blue Heron," "Naked Girl on Hilltop," and "Mountain Forest" are such as one returns to. In these grim times the calm music of this verse should appeal to many.

Years ago John G. Neihardt began his "Cycle of the West" which is now completed with the present book. The books which are all parts of this finely conceived and executed epic did not appear in the exact order they take in the whole. This order is: The Song of Three Friends, The Song of Hugh Glass, The Song of Jed Smith, The Song of the Indian Wars, The Song of the Messiah. The Cycle runs from 1822 when the Ashley-Henry men went up the Missouri from St. Louis, and ends with the Battle of Wounded Knee. The present member of this body of narrative verse is the story of the greatest of our continental explorers after Lewis and Clark. He led the first American pioneers into Spanish California, and was first to cross the great central desert from Salt Lake to the Sierras. In his usual pentameter couplets, Mr. Neihardt tells the tale as though it were being discussed around a campfire. He has always been able to make such stories vivid.

Paul Engle needs no introduction either. This is his sixth book. He is sometimes, in his longer poems, merely didactic, but says things that need saying:

Beware among you those who think a man
Can walk the frantic fence of compromise,
Balanced in brutal and conflicting winds,
The chance not taken and the choice not made.

and

Do not forget in the dark and furious hour
West of midnight lies America.

His figures of speech are usually modern and original.

Give me the aviator's metal eye
To hunt bright hope beyond the rainy sky.

. . . all day the lazy snow
Falling like ashes from an old man's pipe

Sight drifts back to my eyes
Like homeward plane to its own hangar

Hold natural form, as a dog's tail its true curve.

The poem about his Finnish friend is full of warm humanness. He says of America, "There is a future-frenzy in our mind, bone of our face, like the true Indian bone, lifted with onward looking," and that we will "not cringe in any hidden room, wrapped in the woven warmth of history." Of his poems of man and woman, "A Shared Thing" is fine. "Pair" and "The Wearing Rough" have unusual verses. I should select the sonnets on Emerson and Frost from the others, and I like other lyrics too, but the poem on "American Harvest" (which *Life* printed) is one of the best of American poems for the present, featuring as it does the barns and the harvest for the future:

As the great strength of barns grows from the land
Bearing their weight, filling their bin and mow,
So from the way and wonder of our living
Have we a power and fury of our own
Defying those who would by argument

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George Zabriskie

Within ourselves, or desperate threat outside,
Leach our minds like a furrowed hillside farm.

But the most exciting to me of all these poets is young George Zabriskie who was recently paragraphed in the press as having been a taxi-driver in his worst days. He also helped Newman Ivey White on his recent definitive biography of Shelley, and as astute a judge of verse as Leonard Bacon has liked his work. It is the best kind of modern work because it hangs together, is full of exact observation, makes no concessions, but does not attempt what is beyond its grasp as yet. In the beginning the American poet sets out in search of the romantic myth of Daniel Boone. In the end he finds, beside the American past:

A coal mine, a river flood, the Louisville Streets
To remember Kentucky: and beyond, the pitted face
Of East St. Louis coughs desolation over the river . . .
We who came to the mountains in the June rain,
Seeking pioneer footprints and horsedung,
Have been molested by insolent cows: chased
By a one-eyed truck shouting "sons of bitches."
We took a narrow gauge train to Tennessee: mist
Hung over the blueing mountains, but dispelled
In our long return to the inconclusive cities
Of the adding machine and mimeograph towers.

His descriptions of the West Shore are the "thing seen," as well depicted as by any modern American painter. He knows locomotives, railroads, slow freights:

The negro leans upon the railroad bridge
To watch the rattling freight go through.
The dream
Fades in their eyes; with fourteen offspring
There is no dream, with the land settled
Clear westward, there is no further range; only
The idle factory by the tracks for memory.
Young men go west, their white faces peering
From the box car doors for a thousand miles.

This is actual America. The short poems are good too. My only criticism would be that, read right through, Mr. Zabriskie's handling of loose pentameter becomes monotonous. He covers a great deal of America; but there is, after all, more variety to it than that. Still, this is admirable work, well seen, well written. It is less self-absorbed than the work of most young men, more foxterrier-curious about life and his own country. If it does not paint a portrait like that of the advertising slogans, that is, after all, so much to the good.

C. F. MacIntyre is a cultivated and educated man with a gift for poetry, but very uneven in his execution. The smooth flatness of his "Vigils" is nadir. But, on the other hand, "Maidens" is flawless. "Moon-Gazers" delightful. "Attis" sharp, "God Makes a Find" almost as good as something by James Stephens, "Said Thomas Hobbes" excellent, "The Sycamore" beautiful, and he can write this of a snake:

This set of springs in cloisonné,
this blood and bone attired as rope,
this Gordian knot of mercury,
can slip away as slick as soap,
He can say of a donkey
To meet the rocky path with dibble-hoof
and grow stout chisel-teeth to nibble trees!

He can give us the line "dubiously as a whisker scans a shave," and remark of T. S. Eliot:

He scratched a frigid finger on his head
which suddenly proved fertile and begot
two epigrams which meant the Lord knows what,
then sickened and climbed permanently in bed.

But his sonnets on characters only serve to remind us how extraordinary those of Edwin Arlington Robinson were, and when he becomes fantastic he sometimes succeeds only in being rather cute. Nevertheless, as I have shown, there is originality here.

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 421)

*LAWSON:

THE STAR OF AUSTRALASIA

There are boys out there by the western creeks . . .
Who'll stick to their guns . . .
. . . . . .
When the peaks are scarred and the sea-walls crack till the furthest hills vibrate,
And the world for awhile goes rolling back in a storm of love and hate.

*Australian poet. Written about 1896.

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Three Women Poets

THE METAPHYSICAL SWORD. By Jeremy Ingalls. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1941. 80 *pp.* $2.

POEMS AND NEW POEMS. By Louise Bogan. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1941. 116 *pp.* $2.50.

DAWN IN SNOW. By Louise Townsend Nicholl. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1941. 60 *pp.* $1.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

OF these three women poets, Miss Bogan has long maintained a distinguished place both as poet and critic, Miss Nicholl's unobtrusively beautiful work is becoming better known, Miss Jeremy Ingalls of New England is an exciting new voice.

A poet of thirty-one has still a great deal ahead of her. Miss Ingalls is distinctly native. She was born and educated in Gloucester and is teaching in the Middle West. "The Metaphysical Sword" was the 1941 choice for the Yale Series of Younger Poets which Stephen Vincent Benét edits. It seems to me a good choice. Hers is, as he says, " a new strong voice." It is also, sometimes, a peculiar one. Who would have thought, at this late day, to find the overpacked idiom of Browning recurring—

Near of the year two thousand sought and killed
Wolf whelp and lion, dragon stench and spew,
Stank dawn-scrubbed, festering den night-filled,
Swarmed sea, spawned land so driven,
Felled, repelled, howso striven.
No primal terror this nor dragons few.

A phrase of Miss Ingalls's, a good one, is "the woman caught among swords." It describes her. Her words to her pupils, the son of Melchisedek's words to her, and the old man's words to the children, distil wisdom.

She has trained for terror. She knows that the mouse that freed the lion was really eaten. It seems to me, therefore, that she is prepared for the world, carrying with her a certain phylactery bound between her brows. In that she is fortunate. She seeks the world beyond and the world within; and it is too early to say whether her report concerning these will leave phrases inscribed on the world's portals. But here are spirit, and wit, and a pliant wrist for writing. So far they have done well.

By this time one feels somewhat Louise Bogan's limitations. That is not to say that she is not an accomplished poet, one of the most accomplished of the older women poets still with us. Some of her cadences are lovely.

Not for you, beautiful and ridiculous, as are always the true inheritors of love,
The bearers; their strong hair moulded to their foreheads as though by the pressure of hands

which might be from the Greek Anthology—but then it is electrifying to hear the second of "Several Voices Out of a Cloud" shout suddenly,

Parochial punks, trimmers, nice people, joiners true-blue,
Get the hell out of the way of the laurel. It is deathless. And it isn't for you.

It is difficult to understand the Irish. Miss Bogan is Irish. She has that black tarn in her heart. Also, her poetry is, and always has been, intensely personal. She has inherited the Celtic magic of language, but has blended it somehow with the tartness of New

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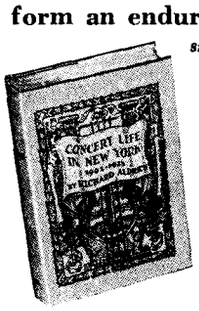
says ROYAL CORTISSOZ *in the N. Y. Herald Tribune*



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by Richard Aldrich

PUTNAM'S

Easter Evening, 1942

By Leonard Bacon

IS this the time to speak? Shall we tell the strong
What they already know? Or tell the weak
What not to fear? Divide the right and wrong
With the musical tongue in the poetic cheek?

Shall we lift up some outcry, when our fate
Moves on us like a hurricane or flood?
With a few syllables make more delicate
The spectacle of violence and blood?

No! There is only this. And no Tyrtaean
Sentence is worth the expenditure of ink.
We need no marching song, nor any poem.
Only reality in what we think

And the mere valor of the common man,
That always will continue and persist,
That can endure all grief, and knows it can,
And, till it wins, will not unclench the fist.

It is beginning of wisdom when we withdraw
From the pleasant places where all things went well.
That's over. We obey the ancient law
That teaches us to make strange Heaven in Hell.

Many are cowards. Many others lie.
The cowards must learn courage, the liar learn
Not to invent disasters in the sky,
Where, he has said, only cross planets burn.

"Not for some victory," not for any race,
Or dull dominion of this world we fight
But for all strength of thought, kindness, and grace
That made "the feud with Chaos and Old Night."

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Jeremy Ingalls

England—"the darkness at the root, the rain, the dew"—her crossed apple. She is her own Cassandra:

To me, one silly task is like another.
I bare the shambling tricks of lust and pride.
This flesh will never give a child its mother,—
Song, like a wing, tears through my breast, my side,
And madness chooses out my voice again,
Again. I am the chosen no hand saves:
The shrieking heaven lifted over men,
Not the dumb earth, wherein they set their graves.

Miss Nicholl is a sentimental poet as compared with these others. But her title poem is beautiful; her poem on her father precisely right; and "The Apple Tree's Death" we feel as acutely as the writer felt it. This is no small praise. "Men without Daughters" is also an excellent poem. Miss Nicholl's religious poems are simple and honest; and the "Wreath" is one I think that George Herbert might have liked, or even the later John Donne; though her manner is her own and quite modern enough.

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Flower Poems

By Padraic Colum

IRISES

WHERE are they now, the softly blooming flowers
Of name unhard, unbarred—the Irises?
Their stalks are shears stuck in the hardened ground.
We named their colors, but our sights could measure
Never their colors' depths, so deep the veins
Of argent, azure and cerulean
That brought into our minds the Undine lands.

ROSES

"THE ideal mistake,"
Or "mistaken ideal
Of Roses," wrote
Stephane Mallarmé.

But where they grow
As here I see them,
Out of old walls
In the Alhambra—

I think no Tulip
Praised by Hafiz,
No Lotos worn
By Sukuntala—

No Lily held
A regal emblem
By Babylonia's
Hammurabi—

Is formed more
Than these are on
The fair and true
Ideal that's floral—

Enamelled green
Of leaves, and blooms
Like blood of desert
Horses, ardent!

WATER LILIES

A DARKY girl gathered up
The water-lilies she would sell.
And did she know that she had in
Their dankness, gold and ivory,
The preciousness of Africa?
She did not cry what she would sell,
No "Oh, oh, oh, ma waher lilies!"
Out of the pond that was her pail
The orbed and broad-leaved flowers! She
Smiled, her look was sybilline,
And I, my errant thoughts arrayed,
Saw in the pond that was her pail,
Outlayed, chryselephantine flowers!

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Poetry Bulletin Board

No I Didn't. Was You?

ACTION, DIDN'T IT. Seven Variations on a Synthesis. By Philip Conrad. Muscatine, Iowa: The Prairie Press. 1941. 52 *pp.* $2.50.

THERE is a sort of free association double-talk that passes today under the name of poetry. This long poem is it. It is as boring in spots as some of W. H. Auden. The blurb says, "You could do with a camera what this poem does with words only if you could isolate the spiritual ambiguity and melancholy of America and photograph it from successive angles with your lens slightly out of focus to blur the detail and stress the essential contour." All I know is, I cannot praise this poem highly. I cannot understand it. If you cut up with a jigsaw the enormous and complicated layer-cake called America and then jumbled the pieces all together and had them whisked out of a hat by an electric fan, you might get something like it. Or would you?

Bathsheba's Bath

BATHSHEBA. By Virginia Horton Rogers. New York: Wilfred Funk, Inc. 1941. 81 *pp.* $2.50.

MISS ROGERS has been very frank about Bathsheba when aroused. She first gives us the setting in free verse, and then Bathsheba speaks in sonnets that outdo Ella Wheeler Wilcox at times. But the poetry is really a good deal better than Wilcox. There is narrative force in it. The sexual side of it is more honest than in most poetry, and Bathsheba's yearning over her child is quite moving. Miss Rogers's writing is simple and direct. What I miss is any extraordinary lift of phrase or unusual insight.

Norman's Later Work

THE SAVAGE CENTURY. By Charles Norman. Prairie City, Illinois: The Press of James A. Decker. 1942. 80 *pp.* $2.

SOME things in Mr. Norman's previous volumes, "Poems" and "The Bright World," I much admired. I do not find that this book adds to his reputation. While the title poem is effective, elsewhere, in attempting the most difficult kind of poetry—that which is crystal-clear, epigrammatic, and terse—I cannot feel that he is often successful. His sonnets, too, have a way of sliding off the mind. I do not find his own personal signature on many of the poems. Obviously there is sensitivity in these pages, there is the unfolding of beauty, there is dedication to a strict art. Perhaps it is the vast upheaval of the world that has wrecked the delicate balance.

Connecticut, and War

DEATH AT THE PURPLE RIM. By Hyam Plutzik. New York: Printed by the Author. 1941. 37 *pp.* $1.50.

STRANGELY enough, a little paper-bound book printed by the author, and concerned with Connecticut, and, ultimately, with war, turns out to be a book worth reading. A story in blank verse, swinging almost like the metre of "Evangeline," of a Russian immigrant, a worker in the soil, who killed at last an ugly beast in the sunlight of his garden, and on whom the curse of Cain somehow descended subtly. Once you start the poem you must read it through. It is a remarkable piece of work. It has humor as well as the tragic sense. It is impressive. Whoever this writer is, he should certainly be admitted to the company of good poets.

A Poet-Publisher

SALUTE TO THE NEW-BORN. By Loker Raley. New York: Loker Raley. 1941. 77 *pp.* $2.

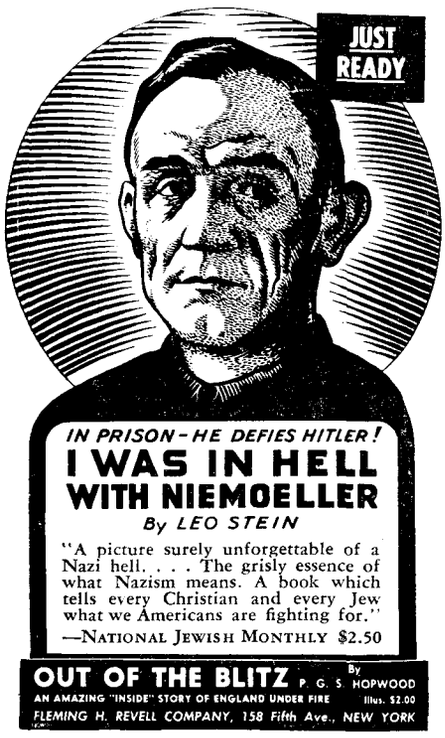
A YOUNG Marylander whose forebears settled there over three hundred years ago, first tried radio production and then turned publisher. About half the books he has brought out have been of poetry, and now he gives us poems of his own. They do not make a very deep impression upon me, though they are thoughtful and sensitive. Technically they are uncertain, sometimes vague, sometimes awkward. He will, somehow, even use words like "pelf" and "haply." Much more work needed to be done upon a good many. His next book will probably show an improvement.

A Religious Poem

A WOMAN WRAPPED IN SILENCE. By John W. Lynch. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1941. 277 *pp.* $2.

THIS is a long narrative poem of the Mother of Christ, in a book the size of a novel. I can recommend this dignified volume to all who are truly religious and wish to read a straightforward account of the great woman in the world's most remarkable story. As to the medium, it is most pedestrian blank verse, scarcely more than prose divided into regular lines. Occasional figurative language, as when the "sun was lapidist," not, unfortunately, "lapidary," are not very successful. But the simple telling of the story has its own force, though it bears very little relationship to poetry.

W. R. B.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The Wild Bird

By Dilys Bennett Laing

ALL birds that fly and fall
to claw of cat, or gun, or grief of cage,
cry through my thought: we too my dear shall die.

Life is not willing to be clipped of wing
too long, but prisoned small
from reachless frontiers to a cage's size,
ceases at last to drink or sing
and in a lonely rage
breaks through the bars, and flies.

Nothing is still: not thought, not light, not stone.
Even the stiff wings on the floor have flown.

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TRADE WINDS

IF WOLCOTT GIBBS or Geoffrey Hellman suddenly begins exhibiting an unusual interest in a recital of your juvenile escapades and current idiosyncracies, it is reasonable to assume that the *New Yorker Magazine* is planning to run a Profile of your career, and the conservative thing to do is to hop a boat for Brazil forthwith and take a job in the emerald mines. The Profile is the diabolic invention of Editor Harold Ross, and it has made medieval torture instruments look like baby rattles. Victims of *New Yorker* profiles can generally be spotted by the incredible speed with which they turn on their heels when Ross barges into a room, all of which sends the perverse Mr. Ross into gales of immoderate laughter.

At the moment of writing, the sword is hanging over the head of Ralph Ingersoll, editor of *PM,* who knows that Wolcott Gibbs has Profiled him to a turn, and fears the worst. Ingersoll once worked for Harold Ross. He bearded the lion in his private den one day and talked himself into an assistant editorship, although some of his elation vanished when, after he had agreed on terms and walked happily to the elevator, he heard Ross screaming "Damn it all, I seem to hire any nut that sticks his face in here!"

After some years at the *New Yorker,* and more at *Time,* Ingersoll embarked on the adventure that is the talk of the journalistic world today. *PM* was launched in June, 1940, just as the Nazis were trooping into Paris. Marshall Field was the principal backer, but a considerable number of important figures in the book world had a finger in the pie. The advance campaign for *PM* was so brilliant and so high-powered that the appearance of the actual paper was a terrific anticlimax. Everything seemed to go wrong with it at the same time. The original capital disappeared in a few short months. The circulation dropped below 90,000. A disgruntled stockholder, who couldn't even get in to tell the harassed editor what he thought should be done to improve the situation, was heard to exclaim: "The trouble with Ingersoll is that his failure has gone to his head!"

But Ingersoll hadn't failed. He persuaded Marshall Field to supply fresh capital. He worked day and night to perfect the radical formula that he felt could put *PM* on its feet. And suddenly, a few months ago, he clicked.

Every issue of *PM* today packs dynamite. It is a newspaper in its shirtsleeves, informal and uncompromising, and it is all out to eliminate the forces in this country that are hindering the war effort. If you have never seen a copy of *PM,* or if you dropped it in the first discouraging months, order it delivered for a week, and I think you will understand why its circulation is now up to 150,000, and mounting fast. *PM* takes no advertising, but it sells for a nickel, and will about break even at the 200,000 mark.

On the way up, some very good men were dropped by *PM* along with the bad. This was unfortunate, but I don't think it could be helped. There are still lots of things wrong with the paper. Features are retained that must be written by skeletons in Ralph Ingersoll's closet. And I hear that it is still pretty hard to wangle a correction when a mistake is made in a story. But on the whole, *PM* is showing the way to a lot of fine old papers that have been seized with a fit of palsy at just the wrong time.

These sentences are written as a tribute to the man who has seen the job through almost single-handed. My hat is off to him—but bare-headed or not, I'm looking forward to that *New Yorker* Profile myself!

IN A RECENT ISSUE of the *Atlantic Monthly,* Miss Ann Watkins, one of the best-known literary agents in America, wrote an engaging piece acquainting the general public with some of the inside facts of her flourishing trade. To the jaundiced eye of a publisher, it appeared that Miss Watkins occasionally confused her confreres with the Angel Gabriel, but her plea for a standard rule to govern division of subsidiary rights in a book contract was eloquent and reasonable, and very much needed saying. Under existing circumstances there is generally a fine old free-for-all every time that this subject comes up for discussion at a contract conference. Picture rights, often the most lucrative feature of an entire publishing project, are the chief bone of contention. Some agents haughtily declare that they never allow a publisher to share at all in these rights. On the other hand, there are publishers who have gulled unsophisticated new authors into signing over far more than they deserved. The playwrights and producers agreed long ago on a basic and automatic rate of division of all sums realized from the sale of picture rights. Miss Watkins thinks that it is high time for publishers and authors to do the same. I thoroughly agree with her. So does the *London Bookseller* which devoted an entire page to a reprint of her remarks.

BENNETT CERF.

PERSONALS

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YOUNGISH, green-fingered woman would correspond with gentleman anywhere who enjoys gardening, badminton and/or "Saki." Box 967-E.

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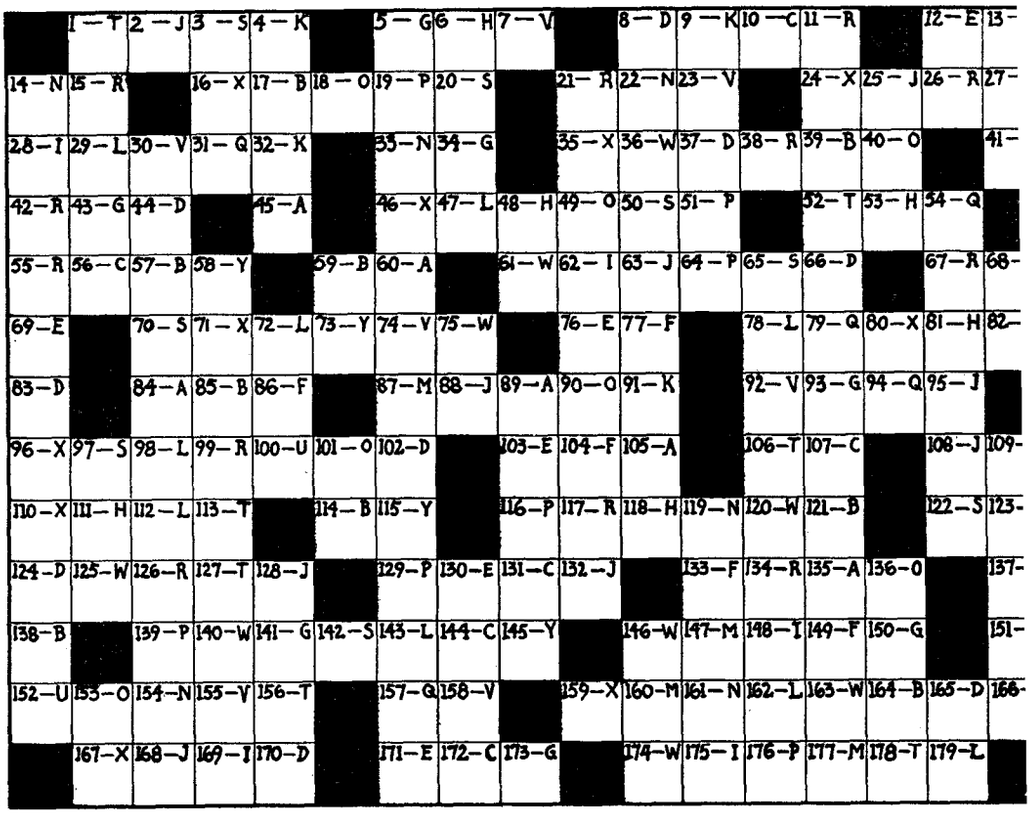

Double-Crostics: No. 422

By ELIZABETH S. KINGSLEY

DIRECTIONS

To solve this puzzle you must guess twenty-five words, the definitions of which are given in the column headed DEFINITIONS. The letters in each word to be guessed are numbered. These numbers appear under the dashes in the column headed WORDS. There is a dash for each letter in the required word. The key letters in the squares are for convenience, indicating to which word in the definitions each letter in the diagram belongs. When you have guessed a word, fill it in on the dashes; then write each letter in the correspondingly numbered square on the puzzle diagram. When the squares are all filled in you will find (by reading from left to right) a quotation from a famous author. Reading up and down the letters mean nothing. The black squares indicate ends of words; therefore words do not necessarily end at the right side of the diagram.

When the column headed WORDS is filled in, the initial letters spell the name of the author and the title of the piece from which the quotation has been taken. Authority for spelling and definitions is Webster's New International Dictionary (1940 edition).

The solution of last week's *Double Crostic* will be found on page 21 of this issue.

DEFINITIONS

A. A gobioid river fish of Florida.

B. Name of a book placed at the head of the first page of text (print.; 2 wds.)

C. An ingredient of the Mosaic incense (from a gastropod).

D. Untidiness: disorder.

E. Spirit conjured by Bolingbroke in *Henry VI* (Pt. 2, Act 1).

F. Norwegian King whom Macbeth defeated (Act. I).

G. One of the Graeae (Gr. myth.)

H. To address, greet.

I. A King bound in Tartarus to an endlessly revolving wheel (Gr.)

J. Pharisee, member of the Sanhedrin, secret disciple of Jesus.

K. Slayer of Eglon and deliverer of Israel from the Moabite yoke.

L. Place of Major Andre's capture (1780).

M. Roughly squared (logs).

N. Pertaining to the alimentary canal.

O. Novel by James Lane Allen (with *The*).

P. Those who thrust themselves in where they are unwanted.

Q. To begin; to arrive at the point of (2 wds.)

R. To have completed or finished (3 wds.)

S. Disdainful.

T. Malvolio's office *(Twelfth Night)*.

U. Openings; mouths.

V. Cape in Chile, S. point of S. A. mainland.

W. Fiery, spirited.

X. Original natives, fauna or flora of a country.

Y. The American ones by Dickens caused a stir.

WORDS

A.	84	135	60	45	89	105			
B.	85	164	39	121	114	59	138	17	57
C.	107	172	144	10	56	131			
D.	8	102	165	66	124	170	83	37	44
E.	171	69	12	103	76	130			
F.	149	133	86	104	77				
G.	141	150	151	5	93	43	173	34	
H.	111	81	53	6	118	48			
I.	175	62	169	148	28				
J.	132	2	108	88	25	63	95	168	128
K.	32	4	9	91					
L.	112	47	78	162	179	29	143	72	98
M.	147	177	87	160					
N.	119	22	33	154	14	137	161		
O.	109	166	49	101	136	18	40	90	27	153
P.	116	51	129	19	82	41	139	64	176
Q.	31	79	54	157	94				
R.	11	21	26	38	99	42	126	15	55	67	117	184
S.	65	97	70	142	50	122	3	20				
T.	156	106	113	1	52	178	127					
U.	152	123	100									
V.	92	74	158	7	30	155	23					
W.	140	163	146	36	120	61	75	13	174	125		
X.	24	96	71	167	159	16	35	46	110	80		
Y.	58	115	68	73	145							

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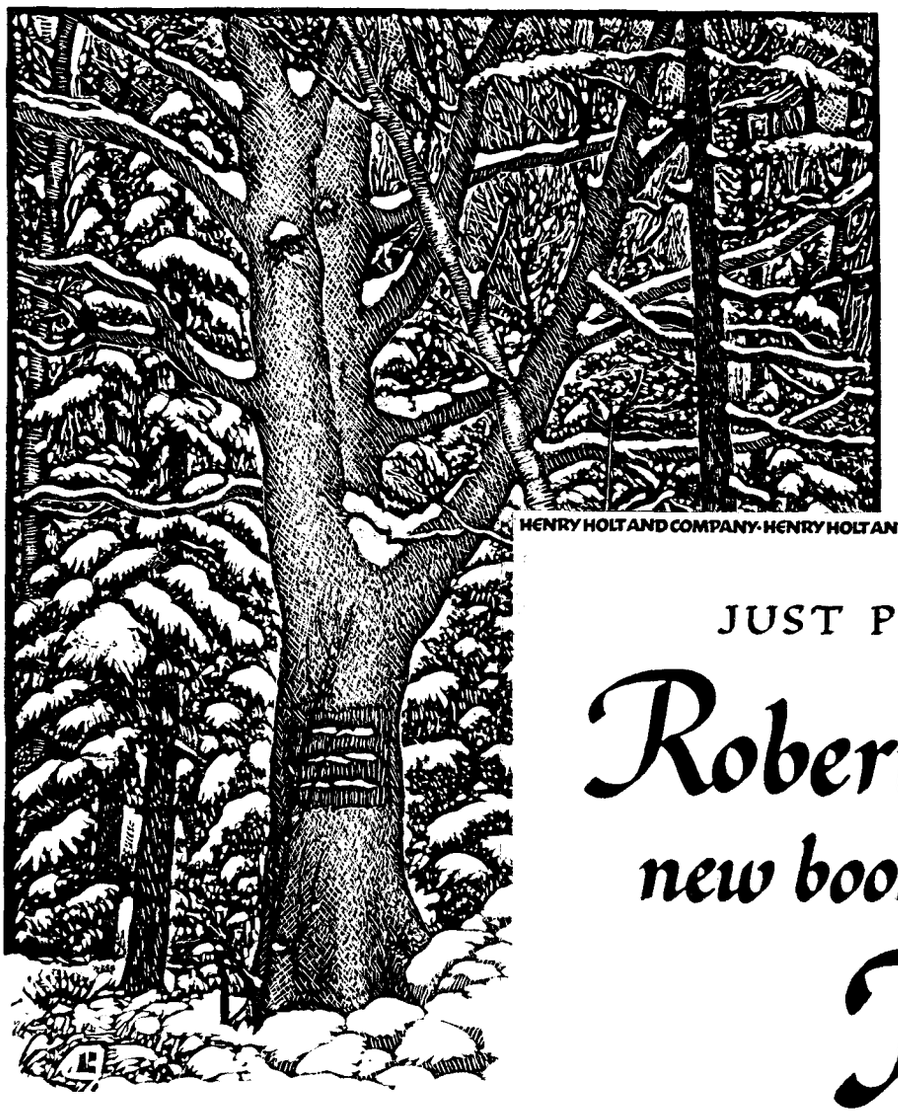

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